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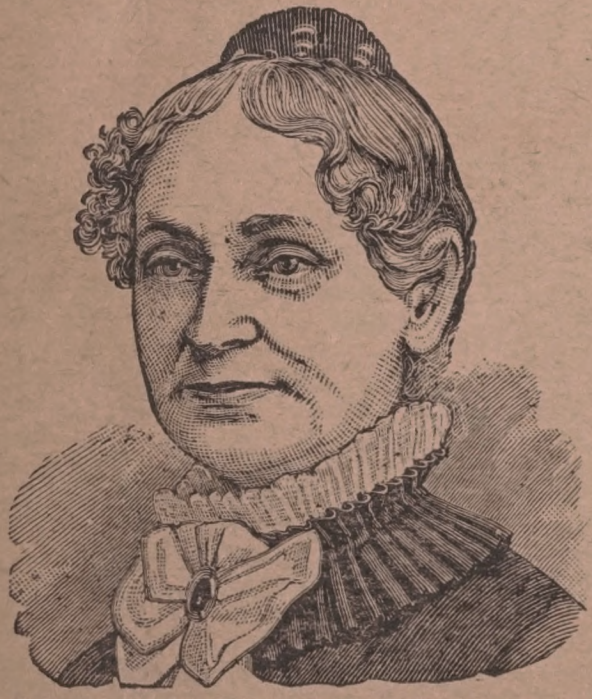

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A MERE CHILD

BY

L. B. WALFORD

AUTHOR OF "MR. SMITH," "THE BABY'S GRANDMOTHER," ETC.

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TROW'S
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PART I.—JERRY.

But, then, your odd endearing ways,
What study e'er could catch them?
Your pretty gestures, endless plays,
What canvas e'er could match them?
Your lively leap of merriment,
Your murmur or petition,
Your serious silence of content,
Your laugh of recognition.

Here were a puzzling toil indeed
For Art's most fine creations.
Grow on, sweet baby; we will need
To note your transformations
Hereafter, when revolving years
Have made you tall and twenty,
And brought you blended hopes and fears,
And sighs, and slaves in plenty.

A MERE CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

THE HEIRESS AT FIFTEEN.

Thy steps are dancing toward the bound
Between the child and woman;
And thoughts and feelings more profound,
And other years are coming.

"No, really, Jerry, I cannot have it. No, my dear child, you really are—this really is more than I can put up with. I have overlooked a great deal, for, of course, this is an out-of-the-way place, and dress is not of much consequence here; but you seem to have no conscience in the matter. And really, for a great girl of fifteen to be going about such a figure—why, who, seeing you to-day, would ever dream of taking you for a young gentlewoman? They would take you for a fisherman's daughter—nay, for the fisherman himself. I should not be in the least surprised if anybody meeting you going about as you are now were to take you for one of the fishermen of the village!"

This suggestion was, sooth to say, not altogether unmerited.

"Jerry"—a fond granddame's abbreviation for the more elegant "Geraldine"—had, for convenience sake, inserted her brisk, healthy young person into an ancient yellow oil-skin fishing-coat, which completely covered

every feminine garment underneath, and the collar of which, standing up round her ears, was lost beneath the shade of one of those seafaring glazed caps known as "sou'westers," whose long flap behind would obviously ward off the severest wetting.

With bare hands plunged deeply in capacious pockets, and a pair of the stoutest boots which the village boot-maker—a man accustomed to make for ploughboys and fishermen—could produce (for none but these would have pleased his present customer)—the daughter of an ancient house, and sole heiress to a large estate, presented an appearance which, it must frankly be confessed, was liable to confuse the mind of any ordinary beholder.

"It really is too much, quite too much," murmured Geraldine's grandmother, in the piteous accents of weak disapproval common to those who have long since found their tyrants. "I really ought not to allow it; I know I ought not."

Jerry's eyes twinkled.

"Whoever sees you," began the old lady again—but time was passing, and it was necessary this should be put a stop to.

"Who is there to see me?" cried the defaulter, merrily. "I say 'Who?' and Echo answers 'Who?' Now, my dear granny, you had best say 'Who' yourself, and let me be off—there's a dear."

"How can you tell whom you may meet?"

"But I never do meet anyone."

"That's not to say you never may. And for you, a young lady, my granddaughter, to be marching all over the place——"

"Oh, dear, I never thought of marching. Not but what I could march finely in this nice, comfortable coat," shaking herself anew into it, "but there's this difficulty, that there's no road where I am going, and one can hard-

ly march through peat-bog and birchen-wood. Oh, we are only going to fish the burn, and I never meant to be seen at all, not even by you, granny. I had been going to slip out by the side door, and scuttle along by the garden wall, only that I had left my rod and line in the window here, and you were such a tiresome, mischievous old granny, that you popped out upon me before I could escape. It was a shabby thing to do, dear, it was indeed"—and the "sou'wester" wagged from side to side reproachfully.

"You madcap thing!"

"Oh, madcap thing," quoth Jerry, philosophically; "you often told me that, you know. And if these clothes keep me from getting wet——"

"Clothes! my dear child, call things by their right names. This sail-cloth and oil-skin——"

"Well, this sail-cloth and oil-skin. If it keeps me from getting a cold and sore throat——"

"Oh, if you must go out in the rain, it is certainly better not to run the risk of getting a cold and sore throat. But it is really high time for you to give up this sort of thing, Jerry. A young lady like you——"

"Ought to be sitting perked up on the great drawing-room sofa, winding skeins of worsted, or scribbling over yards of music paper," cried Jerry, with indignant contempt. "No, thank you, dear, not as long as I can help it. And I do not believe you will *ever* turn me into a young lady of that sort even if I should live to be a hundred, or a thousand," added she, still more energetically. "As if I could sit down, and yawn beside the fire in that great hot drawing-room this glorious afternoon, when the waterfalls are crashing over the rocks, and the big trout below will be all on the alert, and it is but throwing a line to have them bouncing after you! Oh, I couldn't do it, I really could not do it, if I tried

ever so. And, what's more, you would be sorry for me if I did, Madam Granny; and then I know how it would be; you would relent just too late, and never, never, never forgive yourself for the cruelty of it. So there—kiss and be friends—and don't keep me one other single second, there's a dear, good, kind granny."

"You will not go far, dear child?"

"Far? Not I. I have no need to go far. Cannot you hear them? Why, the falls have been roaring ever since noon, with the spate from the hills in the night; but it is no use fishing till they have gone down a little; they will be just in trim now—at least the pools will——"

"Those deep pools!"

"I'll take care—I will indeed, dear," touched by the sigh which, while it betokened the close of the contest, also appealed to the generosity of the conqueror. "You don't know how careful I am," protested Jerry, earnestly.

"You are not going alone?"

"Donald goes with me, of course."

"Well, Donald is *something*," conceded her grandmother, ruefully. She could not say "somebody," for she could hardly recognize a person in the ragged, barefooted, twelve-year-old brat, who was Geraldine's self-constituted attendant out-of-doors; but she could allow that the presence of a cat-like creature, with eyes to dart, and long supple arms to catch, and a high yelling voice to shout, was at best better than absolute solitude. "Donald is *something*," she said; "why, he is not here?"

"He is here. He has been waiting for me down at the white bridge for ages and ages. He must think I am never coming. Oh, Donald and I will be all right, never you fear; and we shall bring you in such a basket of beauties—and see, the rain has stopped and there is the blue sky overhead—and look, look, such a glorious

stream of light has broken out over the water! Oh, you will never stop in the house yourself now; you must get out at once—this very minute. Send for Jane, and bundle on your things; and—'I'm off, I'm off, and awa', over the hills and far awa', tra-la, tra-la, tra-la,'" and bang went the huge oak door, as with the joyous whoop of a school-boy, and the pace of a whirlwind, away flew Miss Geraldine Campbell of Inchmarew, the greatest heiress in the length and breadth of Argyll.

Mrs. Campbell stood still for a moment ere she turned and re-entered the deserted drawing-room.

"She is only fifteen," she murmured, in a tone little resembling that in which the "great girl of fifteen" had been exhorted to better ways. "Only fifteen, and there are yet three full years before she need be presented to the world. But what if she goes on as she is doing now? No, she will not, she must not. No, we shall see a change ere then. She will tone down, soften, grow less wild and careless, improve in shape. At present she is all arms and legs, and though she carries it off well, still her figure is that of a child—a fine, growing child. She will be tall presently, every few months there is a difference. Her waist is too large—but waists are large at her age. I wonder if I am partial, but it seems to me the child needs nothing that time will not bestow upon her. Such a complexion—such a color! Fairness itself, without a trace of freckle or sunburn, though she runs in and out hatless half the time. But this moist climate is certainly a most charming cosmetic; and Geraldine is right, little as she thinks or cares about it, when she eschews the house, and the warm rooms, and spends her life in the fresh air. Sitting over a fire would be the wreck of her bloom; and as for her shape and carriage, not one of her cousins, with all their gymnasiums and riding-masters and dancing-masters, can show such a straight back and

open chest, and walk with such an elastic, springing step, as my Geraldine. After her own fashion, my child is grace itself; and if only she would not overdo it, and would not make herself such a guy—but, however, I suppose she really will meet nobody, and the servants must be accustomed to her ways by this time—and she is a dear child, and would obey in an instant if I seriously desired her to do anything, so why should I thwart her in a trifle? After all, I need not mind what her aunts say. My own daughters! I brought *them* up without any help from themselves, so surely I may be trusted with my grandchild. Charlotte is jealous, and always was; and Maria would like to have had poor Diarmid's daughter to bring up herself. And really, considering that I was both able and willing to undertake the charge, she need not have wished to see me laid on the shelf quite so soon!" And the old lady drew herself up, and bridled, although she was alone, and no one could have the benefit.

She was not really old, being only a little over sixty, and was still handsome, cheerful, humorous, overflowing with energy, and with an acknowledged zest for neighborly intercourse, pleasant scenes, summer galas, and winter dinner-parties. Above all, however, did she affect the London season on the flowery, showery May-days, when the lustre is yet upon it; when the azaleas and hyacinths in the parks are still more brilliant than the many-tinted throngs around them, when the shop windows are gayest, and the roar of the wheels is loudest, and even the dingiest, dustiest alleys in the background put out their little flower-pots, and make a feint of enjoying life. It was the thought of all this, and the prospect of some day returning to take her part in it, which, more than any matronly anxiety, occasionally found vent in remonstrances such as those with which our chapter

opens; it was the determination that in due time the young heiress should be by all the world admired, honored, and perchance envied, which made her every now and then discontented with the humble pleasures and modest aspirations of her darling.

For Jerry hated the very idea of London. She had never been there—vowed she never would go there.

What did she want with a dirty, smoky old town, with nothing but rows of houses, shrieking underground trains, rattling omnibuses, and every kind of horror?

Oh, she knew—she had heard about it all! It was all very fine for granny to smile. She always knew that "grown-ups" liked towns, and she could remember how, as a child, she had been used to see the men-servants and maid-servants in high glee when the time came for going to Edinburgh for the winter, and how she had been by them instructed that it was very silly and naughty of her not to be glad too, when she ought to be thankful and proud that her papa had a fine house in Moray Place to take her to, instead of having, as many papas had, to stop all the year round in the nasty, cold, wet Highlands, where there was no one to be seen, and not a shop nor a kirk within reach, once the weather turned bad.

That was what the stupid maids had said, when all they had wanted was to get to Edinburgh to see their stupid sweethearts.

She knew better. It had been nothing but "You must not do this," and "You must not do that," from the moment she had arrived in Moray Place. She had not been allowed to stir outside the doors, be the day ever so fine, until Katie had been free to attend her; she had not been allowed to give her dog a run without putting on hat, gloves, and even boots. There had been no rushing round stables, and kennels, and gardens in the dusk

after lessons; no dairy, no poultry-yard to take refuge in; no hens, no pigeons, no young rabbits nor ferrets to feed; no anything. Ten to one when she had been let loose from the school-room it had been, "Miss Geraldine, your mamma wishes to see you in the drawing-room; she has ladies with her." And, of course, nothing had been worse than that.

Now at Inchmarew there was always something to do or to see—new puppies, or chickens, or something. And there was the shore; and the shore there was *always* something. And there was her pony.

But Geraldine was not prone to dwell upon the pony, for in her heart of hearts the young horsewoman was aware that, if the truth were out, her rides at Inchmarew over a rough, hilly district, and always along one monotonous road, with only a choice betwixt turning to the right or the left as the rider emerged from the lodge gate, would ill bear comparison with the grand sweep of country to be traversed in all directions round the Heart of Midlothian. It had been enough that she could affect to add this to her list of grievances; and so it had gone in with the rest, and helped to add up the sum total.

Yes, she had hated Edinburgh, and she was sure, quite sure, she should hate London equally, if not more.

In vain granny had protested, dilated, and assured. Jerry had invariably listened with as much intention of being convinced, and of budging one hair's-breadth from her position, as a young mule—and by this time every one knew with whom lay the reins of power at Inchmarew Castle.

Jerry's parents had been affectionate, but they had also been selfish; in consequence of which she had never been able to lord it so completely over them as she had, since their death, contrived to do over their successor.

Bit by bit granny had yielded on almost every contested point, until at last it had come about that even the spoilt child herself was fain to be generous, and at times ashamed. For Geraldine had a finer nature than had ever yet been manifested.

One circumstance, it must be added, had strengthened the young girl's cause when pleading to be allowed to remain in her Highland fastness undisturbed and unmolested, and this was the assurance privately received by Mrs. Campbell that a few years' retirement and retrenchment would enable the heiress to take her place in the world more fittingly when the time came for doing so than if the money were to be frittered away in town houses, expensive journeys, and the like, beforehand.

Now, of all things, as we have said, the fond grandmother desired to see her darling a great lady, and a great lady fulfilling all the duties and obligations of her high estate. That Geraldine should be good as well as great she sincerely wished and devoutly prayed; but she desired both.

It was, to her mind, fitting and seemly that a Campbell of Inchmarew should go abroad among the great ones of the earth. She had herself wedded a Highland chief, with her head full of all the glories of doing so, and had found all too late that she, an Englishwoman born and bred, was by far the greater Highlander of the two.

The disappointment had been keen, and it had been repeated, for her only son had followed in the steps of his father—had discarded the kilt, never acquired the Gaelic tongue, and knew nothing and cared less about the legends, customs, and traditions of the house. She had felt herself fairly checkmated, and it had caused her many a pang.

And now, behold! just when it was not wanted, and

could well have been dispensed with, all the wild blood that these two very tame specimens of ranting, roving chieftainhood ought to have possessed and never had possessed came surging up to light through the blue veins of a fair girl, and was not to be repressed.

Cock a "Glengarry" on one side over Jerry's golden curls, tuck them out of view, and none could have wished for a bonnier Highland laddie. She possessed the blue, bright eye and saucy lip of every jaunty ancestor. She could whistle, she could stamp, she could featly execute more than one step of the sword-dance and shantreuse; she could go through the Highland fling to admiration. It was her sport to respond in the wildest guttural Gaelic now and again to her mystified, half-indignant relative, and she was seldom seen without a piece of bog-myrtle—the badge of her clan—in the bosom of her frock.

For her looks, her dress, her speech, or her manners, care she had none.

It might have been from an innate sense of superiority, it might have been from sheer pride of birth or certainty of position, it might have been from the mere heedlessness of fifteen—but certain it is that, from whatever source it sprung, no cottage maiden on the lonely moorland thought less, or indeed thought as little, about the effect she produced on those around her as did this wild and winsome Geraldine of Inchmarew.

The roughest plaid, the wrap most soiled and stained and worn by weather, suited her better than any finery procured from fashionable warehouses; and when compelled to array herself in the latter one day in the week, and present something of a suitable appearance at the parish kirk, truth compels us to own that the transformed and elegant young heiress was usually sulky and always miserable.

Ensconced in the grand old family pew, she would fidget from side to side, after the fashion of a restive colt newly caught and ill at ease. She would kick her smart toes against the boards in front, until the delicate French kid would be all worn and shabby, to be regarded by its owner with contemptuous disparagement and mental reference to her own dear, delightful, champing hobnails at home. She would lean back and crush her fine Leghorn hat—well aware that she was doing so—until not all the efforts of her long-suffering maid could restore its normal shape or freshness. She would pull off and on her many-buttoned gloves, and spread and twist her fingers in them. She would shrug her shoulders in her pretty cape, as if it were an annoyance and a restraint upon her movements. As for her frock itself, it would be crumpled and creased in every possible direction; and it was only by dint of having a freshly-crimped and starched muslin or cambric ready for her to put on every Sunday morning that the irrepressible young lady of the manor could be rendered presentable at all.

And yet—and yet—grandmamma saw through it all.

With prophetic vision she beheld, through the vista of a few brief years, the hour of triumph when her darling should be proclaimed peerless among beauties, fairest among the fair.

She could afford to wait.

A faint remonstrance, bravely started, but ending in thin air, as already described above, was, indeed, from time to time essayed; but the annoyance would be transient, the doubt or fear momentary, while the abiding, deep-rooted conviction of her heart was that there was but one created being matchless in the world, and that one was Geraldine.

CHAPTER II.

BY THE MOUNTAIN BURN.

"Thy gentlest sweep, and boldest leap,
Thy rough rock walls, and plunging falls,
Thy foam-bells ringing free;
Thy pools and thy shallows, thy sun-woven shadows,
Thy startles and sallies, thy fern-glades and valleys,
Were early known to me."

Very well aware was the observant young damsel that this was the case; and, being so, it surely said something for her that she was neither inordinately selfish nor exacting nor altogether insubordinate.

She would not vex granny—if she could help it. She would not disregard granny's hours and comforts—if she remembered them. She would not defy granny—if she could get round her in any way.

In her heart she had a great affection—not altogether unmingled with that pity which lies between love and contempt—for the poor dear who could no longer run and jump and race all over the place, gallop on bare-back ponies, pull herself about in the small boat, and fish the mountain streams, as no doubt granny had done in years gone by.

Poor granny! She could have but few pleasures now, and those of a very tame kind.

It must be terrible to be only able to jog along at a languid pace upon the broad back of stiff old Sandy. (Granny was in reality a very vigorous dame of her years, and prided herself upon the manner in which she mounted her sturdy Shetland pony, and set off for a rough hill ride.) But Jerry would stand sorrowfully by to see, and be almost ashamed of the fine spring with which

she alit upon her own little saddle afterward. Worse still must it be for the poor grandmother, she thought, to have to sit idly in the stern of their pretty sailing boat, ensconced in rugs and wraps, and taking no part in the hauling-in or letting-out of the sheet, the tacking, and the other manœuvres with which the men were proud to have their little lady think she was rendering assistance.

Poor granny, moreover, had to stay at home whenever it was wet and misty outside. Now nothing was more exhilarating in Jerry's eyes than being out and abroad in a soaking, blinding drizzle swept in gusts across the moorlands, or flying up from the sea-loch, with a dash of salt spray about it that could be tasted on your lips afterward.

It was delicious to shake out her long wet locks to dry in the sun that would by and by peep out. And then what shining and glistening of crag and corrie, what chirping of rejoicing birds, what freshness of tree and leaf, and, above all, what thundering from the hidden waterfalls which abounded on the moors of Inchmarew! Those falls were pretty well known to her—in especial those belonging to her own mountain burn, the one which dashed through the birches within their own grounds, and whose every turn and winding, pool and shallow, she had been acquainted with from early years.

But poor granny could never see, never get near enough even to guess at the half of this treasure of beauty and delight.

In consequence, granny was supposed to suffer such loss as rendered her an object of very real compassion and forbearance; and in her tender moments the child would even look with satisfaction on the good time for granny which was one day to come, when, in order to give her some enjoyment such as she *could* appreciate

and partake of, she, Jerry, would sacrifice herself in so far as to follow meekly her poor dear in and out of a whole dreadful London season.

Yes, she meant to do that, to go through even with that for her poor dear's sake—granny was always her "poor dear" when in these moods—and, however hateful and wearisome the whole thing might be, granny should never know how much it cost her.

The resolution helped to salve the wilful, young conscience many a time when Jerry had been more than usually self-assertive and independent. She was going to be good by-and-by, and for the present she was going to be—let alone. That, at any rate, was too often the practical outcome of a remorseful fit.

With something of the kind in her mind on the present occasion, the little fisherwoman now ran merrily off down to the bridge, where Donald waited, and was eagerly hailed by that expectant knight.

"Haste ye, haste ye, Miss Jerry," cried he. "We arena' a thocht ower sune. The burnie's doon eneugh, and it will be aye gangin' lower yet. And the sun—it wull no' be the sun that we want—and the sun he will be out himsel' directly," pointing as he spoke to gleams of light here and there breaking out on every side. "Haste ye, then!" exhorted the ragged urchin, ardently; and seizing the basket, and slinging it across his shoulders, while his young mistress with equal dispatch took from him her rod, the two suddenly disappeared from the bridge, and plunged into the recesses of the wood, which at this point approached nearer the Castle grounds than any other.

Breath was precious, and neither wasted it in words. A quarter of an hour's hurried climb brought them to the side of the burn, which could be heard ever more and more distinctly roaring in its tumultuous depths; but,

though brief, the transit was rough enough to have soaked and torn any less durable covering than that donned by the prudent little maid, who now fearlessly followed her pioneer over mossy rock and quagmire, until each had slid down the slimy bank, and found themselves in the hollow, beneath a swollen and bellowing waterfall.

They were not too late. The waters had barely subsided sufficiently for sport, as their anxious critical eyes assured them. A sharp point which should project from the heart of the fall, when the time to fish the pool beneath had arrived, was just putting out its nose, and before that had been done the stream would have been too full.

Donald nodded in silent ecstasy—speech would have been thrown away.

Both, however, understood to move a little lower down, to where the black depth showed signs of yielding and flowing out in a shallower current toward its ocean bed, and then, and almost simultaneously, each threw a line.

Fortune was on their side.

At the very first cast a greedy trout of lusty proportions and in excellent humor, as though as ready to be caught as the fair angler was to catch him, sportively hooked himself on to Jerry's line, and was landed in a trice.

He was but the earnest of the fun to follow.

It was hardly fishing; it seemed all loading, all basketing, all rejoicing, and mute comparing.

At length, however, the little girl's tongue could keep silence no longer, and at an unlucky moment, for she had worked her way to some slight distance from the lad, she let it go. She had just landed a fine one.

"Look, look at this, Donald."

Donald at the moment drew carefully on to the rocks its counterpart.

"Why, yours is still bigger. Oh, I say, isn't it splendid?" shouted his enchanted companion. "Isn't it glorious? Isn't it——"

"What's your wull?"

He thought she had something to say, something for him to do, or to go for.

"Isn't it glorious?" in rising accents.

"Ech?" Only those who know the shrill Highland screech can interpret that "Ech?" whose feeble Southron meaning would be "Eh?" "Ech?" screeched the urchin, wrinkling up his small, shrewd physiognomy, and putting his hand behind his ear, the better to hear and comprehend.

"Nothing—nothing," impatiently. "I only said how splendid it was and what beauties they are," bawled Miss Jerry back, unable, woman-like, to resist the last word.

"E-c-h?" again, at the extreme pitch of Donald's little yelling voice.

"Oh, what's the use of talking?" and Jerry stamped and frowned. "Never mind—never mind, I say. Nothing—nothing—nothing," as the grinning, wrinkled, inquiring face was still stretched out for the information which the noise of the waters drowned. "Stupid boy," added she, *sotto voce*, "hear that, if you can! Oh, the idiot, he is actually coming over the rock to me. Oh, Donald, you idiot, stop where you are! Go back—go back—I don't want you. Go back, I say—back—back!" waving a peremptory hand. "Go—back!" in a last supreme effort.

"Can I tell the boy anything?" inquired a voice almost in her ear.

So startling was the gentle sound that the effect produced upon anyone thus taken at unawares might have

been—nay, must have been, anticipated; but on Geraldine this effect was intensified, from the fact that, in spite of her hardihood and early training, she was unusually susceptible to anything of the kind, and in consequence was strictly guarded from the chance of its occurring.

It could, therefore, be no inmate of Inchmarew, who, plainly with the intention of causing surprise, had thus crept up behind, and now almost breathed in her ear.

On the surface, the interference was, of course, pardonable. A civil inquiry and offer of help, when it appeared that two of a party were desirous of communicating with each other, and were unable to do so, could hardly be cavilled at; and perhaps the perpetrator of the jest was not greatly to blame in that, when the extraordinary and grotesque figure he had addressed whirled round upon him with a gesture that sent her fishing-rod flying over the rocky promontory, and a cry that rose above the raging of the waters, he merely laughed aloud, and that in her very face. But he caught her by the arm, nevertheless, for her foot slipped, and the place was not one to slip in.

"What, you young shaver," he cried, as he did so, "what, I made you jump, did I—eh? By George! it's a girl," catching sight of her face and of a wavy lock around her throat. "It's a girl, by all that's wonderful! And a rare pretty girl, too. Well, my lassie, come, come," as a burst of tears now succeeded the first shock of alarm. "Come, come," continued the stranger, patting her on the shoulder, and still laughing at the success of his trick, "no need for all this din. I would not have done it if I had known you were a girl; but, after all, there's no harm done. I only meant to make you jump. And I owe you one for being beforehand with me at this pool, the best pool in the stream, or I am mistaken. What

business had you two monkeys to spoil the water for me—eh? Little rascals like you can't catch the trout yourselves, and you only make a mess of other people's sport. Oh, I say, though—" as at the moment his eye fell upon the brimming creel, somewhat ostentatiously opened by Donald, who had drawn near, and had understood enough to perceive that some one was being rated, and that his and his young lady's fishing was, moreover, being disparaged.

"Did you catch all those?" demanded the new-comer, in accents which told their own tale.

Donald nodded.

"And here—in this pool?"

The brat nodded again

"Good heavens, what luck! And I'll warrant you have had the best of them, too, you young rascal. And you, too, you Jenny or Maggie, or whatever they call you, you can throw a line as well as he. I saw you from the bank. And I say, what a nice rod," picking it up; "where did you get that rod? Wha gied it ye, lassie?" essaying the broad Northern dialect in an unmistakable Southern accent, and eying the pretty rod, of a make superior to that which he himself held, jealously as he spoke.

There was no sort of response. Miss Campbell, of Inchmarew, was for once feeling herself fairly caught in her own trap. Granny had told her, warned her what might be the result of her present disguise, and that result had strictly come to pass.

The person making the mistake predicted by the wiser head was clearly a gentleman, and poor Jerry, still tearful and sobbing, had all the instincts of a lady.

It was dreadful to her to be addressed as she was now being—not that there was anything rude or disagreeable either in the stranger's tone or manner, but it was suf-

ficiently jocose and familiar to jar upon the ear of a high-born young maiden, accustomed to a certain degree of deference added to courtesy; and although a cottage lassie, such as she was deemed to be, would probably have found no fault either with the jog of the elbow or chuck of the chin which accompanied the last inquiry, it is hard to say which of the two actions the indignant little lady most resented.

Perhaps the swift recollection that she had brought both on herself was worse to bear than all beside.

Hitherto she had not spoken, being sufficiently occupied in steadying her still tremulous limbs, and checking the tears which, do what she would, could not all at once be restrained, but the insult conveyed in the changing of plain English for broad Scotch was too much, and enabled her, better than anything else could have done, to regain full command of her small self. She now drew haughtily away, drew up to her full height—alas! the cruel yellow oil-skin hid the grace with which she did it!—and with quivering, passionate lips strove to assert herself, her rights, and her dignity.

In vain; the stranger only laughed the more.

"Come, I meant no harm," he said, pleasantly. "May I not even touch this rod? Such a clipper as it is, too! I'll do it no harm; I'm used to rods," stretching out his hand as the coveted possession was jerked in another direction. "Oh, I see how it is," continued he, "you have 'no English,' and I, unfortunately, have 'no Gaelic,' so what's to be done? (She's furious, the pretty vixen," aside, "I must appease her or we shall come to blows next.) Hey, young woman—hey, I say. Oh, so you have found your tongue at last, have you? What is it? I can't for the life of me hear a mutter like that; you must speak louder, you know. Louder, miss, louder," nodding at her. "Oh, she is not addressing me at all;

too deeply offended, I suppose; and it is only to the other wild man of the woods that she will condescend to——" but the speaker's own voice died away, his lips fell apart, and the smile faded from his cheek, as he caught at last one distinct, unmistakable sentence, and that delivered in accents which, in spite of their childish treble, had a ring of command as well as the refinement of modulation.

"Donald, tell this gentleman, from me, that this is *my* burn, and that I give him no leave to fish in it, and that I desire him to go away at once."

If ever tables were turned in the twinkling of an eye, they were now upon that gallant young life-guardsman, Captain Frederick Augustus Bellenden, the great man of his family, and great match of his county, and the last person in the world to have been made a fool of by his own blunder.

There was no mistaking the seriousness of the situation.

The ragged imp, to whom the order for Bellenden's summary ejection was intrusted, turned straight upon himself, and in his own fashion confirmed it forthwith.

"The leddy says it will not be here you will fish, nor this burn you will fish to-day. The leddy says it is you who will go where you come from, and leave this place;" and in further demonstration of the validity of his authority, the sturdy shred of a clansman pointed with his finger up the bank, whence he divined the intrusion had been made.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the amazed Bellenden.

"Ech?" shrieked Donald again, drawing closer to him, and still fixedly pointing up the bank. "Ech? Is it the way you would know? There is no other way than that."

"But I—I want to fish here."

"The leddy says——"

"Surely the lady"—and he glanced still doubtfully around—"surely the lady will permit me to fish——"

"I will do nothing of the kind!" said Jerry, with a stamp.

The next instant she was sliding about on the face of the wet and slippery rock, not altogether free from the danger of slipping over either; and, "Good heavens!" again ejaculated Bellenden, for he was now alarmed on a new count. The next instant he had thrown aside his own rod, clasped the swaying form in his arms, seized a birchen branch with one hand, and was swinging himself and his burden by it to a place of safety. At the moment off came the "sou'-wester," and a glorious profusion of shining hair half hid the crimson brow and cheek beneath it.

"A lovely girl," thought the stranger at once; "and what a blessed fool I have made of myself!" Aloud he merely remarked: "Pray, young lady, as long as you live, remember to beware of standing so near the edge of a slippery rock, especially if you are engaged in an absorbing occupation. Upon my word, I thought you were down just now," taking off his cap, and brushing his hand across his forehead. "It was horrid. Ugh! I can't think of it."

"I had Donald," said Miss Campbell, but in rather an altered voice, for she, too, had been frightened, and did not feel quite as she had done toward this stranger a few moments before.

"That child," said Bellenden, contemptuously. "He can take care of himself, I doubt not," for Donald was, at the moment, stepping from ledge to ledge of the giddy points as daintily and safely as a mountain cat might, "but what could a little bit of a creature like that do to save you, if you had another slip like this?

Do, pray, be warned. You—you are very young yourself. Do your parents know you come to a place like this?"

"I have no parents." Her bosom heaved.

"Forgive me," he said, very respectfully; "but you must have some one—some guardian——"

"I have my grandmother."

"And you live with her?"

"She lives with me," quoth the heiress of Inchmarew.

"Oh—h!" Every instant brought a new revelation. He grew more and more grave and courteous.

"And this lady who takes care of you—your grandmamma, does she know this place? Has she ever been with you here?"

But this was too much for Jerry. It was too funny. She really could not help herself; she must laugh if she died for it. Granny at the high pool! Granny, who had never been near the burnside in her life, who knew as much of her pools as she did of the Falls of Niagara, and of her birchen bank as of the precipices of the Andes! She gave way once for all now, and a laugh so sweet, so jubilant, so frank and childish rang out in the ears of the once again astonished Bellenden that he felt as if bewitched by a creature only half mortal. "What was she up to now?"

"Oh, you *are* so funny! Oh, if you only knew how funny you are," cried the child, laughing her high, clear, bell-like laugh again and again, "to ask if Granny comes here! *Granny!* Oh, dear, oh, dear! And if she knows this place! Oh, dear, oh, dear!" and she shook her curly head with eyes that brimmed over, as if the mirth of such a suggestion could never have an end.

"Well, I—I suppose I must be funny since you say I am," responded the stranger, soberly, "though upon my word I did not know it. Young ladies of your age,"

mentally appraising her at twelve, for her face was singularly young, though she was tall enough, "young ladies of your age do not generally go about alone, or with only mountain gillies, and I should say that if your grandmamma knew what a dangerous place this is——"

"The real danger was what you did yourself," retorted Jerry, with a sudden pout. "When you startled me like that I might have fallen off very easily."

"You might, and I can only say that I had not realized the slippery state of the rocks—but any way I ought not to have done it. But now," he added, with a smile, "can you forgive and be friendly? See, I most humbly sue for pardon. I am a total stranger here; I know nobody; and, being stranded for the night at the inn down there, was told by the good woman who keeps it that I might bring her in a dish of trout from this burn, and she especially mentioned this pool within the grounds of Inchmarew Castle."

"She did?" cried Jerry, her eyes glaring.

"I expect she never thought of any one else being out on such a day."

"She had no business to think about it. She knows that this is *my* burn, and that I keep it for myself and my friends."

"Oh," said the young man, and the truth burst upon him. "Then you are Miss Campbell of Inchmarew," he said.

CHAPTER III.

"BY JOVE! WHAT A NICE CHILD!"

"But I shall be past making love,
When she begins to comprehend it."

After this admission it seemed all at once as if the clouds rolled away, the sun shone out, and all was right.

A few sentences did the rest. It seemed but a minute ere he had offered a respectful hand down the bank —very different to the grasp which had conveyed her up it—and the two were chatting away as long as they could be heard, and nodding, directing, and approving, as the case might be, when too near the fall for speech —and the sport began afresh.

After a successful hour or so, Geraldine next proposed a move further up, the presence of the new-comer being accepted by Donald with the stolidity common to his kind, and the three all now upon the best of terms.

After the next hunting-ground had been abandoned, "Where next?" cried Bellenden, gaily, "where next?"

"I am afraid we have no other really good place," replied his young hostess, almost apologetically, for she was now as anxious to do the honors as she had been first to avoid them. "I hardly think we shall get many more to-day, but if you would like to come again to-morrow—" she added, shyly, for it was a great event to her to give an invitation of the kind, and she could get no further.

"To-morrow I am afraid I shall be many miles away, and I shall be shooting instead of fishing."

"Oh," said Jerry. "That's a pity," she added, simply.

"I am on my way to Kincraig," continued the speaker, not unwilling to volunteer a little information in the hope of getting some in return, for things he had heard before had been rapidly coming back to him during the silent part of the past hour or two, and it was, on the whole, rather interesting to have had an adventure with this odd little witch of an heiress, who, report said, possessed, or would possess one day, the best estate and grandest moor in the country. A part of this very moor was, he knew, at present rented by the very friend with whom he was going to shoot on the following day, and accordingly, "I am on my way to Kincraig," he began; but Jerry interrupted him eagerly, and with the pleasurable excitement of one in whose life incidents and events were rare. "Kincraig!" she cried. "Are you going to stay with Archie Kincraig?"

"No; my friend's name is Campbell. He is Archie, however," said Bellenden.

"Oh, Campbell, of course; but we call him Archie Kincraig, because we are all Campbells here. I should have been called Inchmarew if I had been a man; as it is, I am 'Jerry Inchmarew,' because, you see, I am the head of the house—" and again she drew up her young proud figure, and again, alas! the ill-disposed yellow oilskin coat hid the grace of the unconscious movement.

"Your name is Campbell, I know," said Bellenden, amused, "I was told a great deal about Miss Campbell on the boat, as we passed Inchmarew Castle, but I did not hear 'Jerry Inchmarew.'"

"That is only by my friends, you know, not by my people."

"If it had, I might have been a little quicker in guessing who 'Jerry Inchmarew' was."

She laughed. Her wrath had completely gone by.

"And so you have let your shooting?" continued Bellenden.

"Only a part of it. Not the best part either. That is kept for my cousin Cecil."

"Oh!"

"My cousin, Cecil Raymond. He comes to us every twelfth of August, and we expect him this evening. There! I believe this is his boat coming in now," eying a long thin streak of blue smoke discernible over a headland in the loch below. "We shall see her directly, if it is. Yes, there she comes, rounding the point now," said Jerry, excitedly; "look; do you see her? She comes into our own ferry pier next."

"I see her."

"I wonder if Cecil is in her," murmured the little girl to herself, with what seemed to her companion something of a tender interest.

"I know some Raymonds," he observed. "I wonder if this can be one of them—Lord Raymond's family?"

"Why, of course. And Cecil is the eldest son," cried Jerry, with renewed excitement. "Why, how very, *very* odd! And you know my Aunt Charlotte—Lady Raymond—and—and Ethel and Alicia, and all of them? Oh, dear, how strange it seems!"

Bellenden laughed. It was not quite so strange in his eyes, a man of the world, who went everywhere, and made new acquaintances every day; but he was amused and pleased with the impression the wonderful discovery made upon his little friend.

"Oh, yes, I know them all—at least I suppose I do," he said. "I do not know them very intimately, mind; you must not put me through my facings too severely; but I have certainly met both Lord and Lady Raymond——"

"And Ethel and Alicia?"

"Not that I remember. I do not remember any Miss Raymonds."

"Oh, but they are hardly Miss Raymonds yet. Ethel is only a year older than I am, and Alicia is just my age. But Cecil is grown up—he is nearly twenty."

"Twenty? Yes, the Raymond I know must be about twenty. At Oxford?"

"Yes—yes. At Oxford."

"I stayed with him at a house this year. I remember him perfectly. Tall, and fairand——"

"Yes, that is Cecil—why, it is Cecil, of course. Oh, you must come down and see him. Come along, quick, and we'll meet the boat. If we run down straight from here, we can easily head her, and get to the pier first. Do come; Cecil will like us to meet him."

"Like this?" suggested Bellenden, looking first at her and then at himself, though, truth to tell, it was of her appearance only he had his doubts. For himself, he was all right, roughly but suitably and becomingly clad; but Jerry was—such a Jerry! And he knew well that young Oxonians were sensitive on such points, and not likely to appreciate being hailed, even on a Highland pier, by Highland cousins wrapped in oilskins, and topped by sou'-westers.

"To be sure, I had forgotten," owned the little lady herself, coloring slightly under the imputation. "I do look rather queer, don't I? And Cecil is most frightfully, dreadfully particular. I should catch it from granny ever so much, if he were to see me."

"But you don't mind my seeing you?"

"Oh, no—at least, I mean I never thought about it. Granny would have minded, I daresay; but then you will not see granny, unless"—and again the round young cheek was suffused by a blush—"unless you will come home with me, and——"

Now this was the very proposal Bellenden was longing to have made him.

"I should like to see the Raymonds again," he said, thoughtfully.

Perhaps he really thought at the moment that he should like it. Perhaps it was only the remembrance of the close, stuffy, whiskey-reeking little inn at the ferry, which made a chance of escaping from it so seductive; but at any rate the unfortunate traveller felt that for life or death his only hope was to hang on to Cecil Raymond now, and that never in his life before had an acquaintanceship turned up such trumps.

Until within a few moments he had been forced to contemplate passing a luckless night in a damp, rough bed, amid the coarsest surroundings, with heavy mists obliterating all the beauties of the landscape without, and with no companionship, save his own thoughts, within. He had been positively assured that there was no possibility of reaching his friend's shooting-lodge until the following morning; that the boat on which he had depended for proceeding up the loch did not go beyond the ferry on that special evening of the week; and that the best, indeed the only thing, to be done was for him to take up his quarters at Dame Maconochie's little public house, and inhabit her one spare room.

It had been a sorry look-out; but it had been mitigated by the dame's suggestion that he should take her son's rod, and bring her in some trout from the Inchmarew burn, not a mile off, which burn she assured him would be in fine trim after the rain, and was noted for its trout.

The worthy woman had not added that the fishing in its best part was jealously guarded for the benefit of the young mistress of the place, and that any one caught trespassing within the Inchmarew grounds in pursuit of

sport would be in an awkward predicament. She had trusted to the gentleman's not being caught. The odds were that he would not be so; the day being so exceedingly bad; and the stream having been so greatly augmented by the recent rains, she concluded that the little miss would hardly be allowed out, and that, at any rate, if the worst came to the worst, the stranger would say nothing about *her*. She did not think he would even know her name.

She had equipped and seen him off joyfully, and he had had no idea of going where he should not have gone, nor of doing what he should not have done, until informed by Donald, or rather by Donald's liege lady, of his high misdemeanor.

He was now disposed to return evil for good, and, instead of saying "Thank you" to his landlady for a merry afternoon's excellent sport, to slip through her fingers, and let her cook her unsavory dinner for some one else.

"I should like to see the Raymonds again," was, however, all he said.

"Then come up and dine with me," replied Jerry, promptly. "Do—I am sure you may. I am sure granny would let me ask you."

"Are you sure?" said Bellenden, unable to help smiling at the childish form the invitation had taken. "But then, you see, I do not know your grandmamma, and——"

"It is not granny's house, you know; it is mine," anxiously.

"Oh, I understand."

"And if *I* ask you," the spoilt child again asserting itself in her tone; "if *I* ask you——"

"I need no other invitation, certainly," said he, courteously. "Only, you see, you are really too kind. You do not even know my name."

"Well, what is your name?"

"Bellenden. But I will tell you what I can do, Miss Campbell——"

"Don't call me Miss Campbell; it makes me feel foolish."

"But, in my turn, I don't know your name—I mean your other name."

"It is Geraldine—but no one calls me that except Cecil."

("Cecil again," thought he. "Cecil is privileged, I presume.) What am I to call you, then?" he inquired aloud.

"Why, Jerry, of course. Everybody does."

"Very well, Jerry." But she saw he was laughing. She was so changeful, so whimsical, this sprite of a chieftainess, that one moment it would be "my castle," "my moor," "my" everything, and the next she was asking him to call her "Jerry!" One thing, however, was clear, that what she asked must be done; and amazed at himself for the readiness with which he fell in with her humors, Bellenden only hoped that the adventure would proceed as cheerily as it had begun.

"Well, then, Jerry, what am I to do now?" he dutifully proceeded. "Am I to get your cousin to bring me up with him? Am I to tell him you invited me?"

"If you *could* do without telling him that!"

"Oh, I could, of course. But why do you mind? Will you not tell your grandmother?" for it struck him that unless some one were told he could not very well accept of such haphazard hospitality.

"Of course I'll tell granny." The child's eyes opened. "I tell granny everything. *She* doesn't matter," exclaimed the candid grandchild; "and I don't see why I should mind Cecil either," added she, bravely, "only that I don't like to vex my poor dear, and if he were to lecture me it would vex her. It is not for myself I mind," concluded she with earnest emphasis.

"She shan't be vexed," said Bellenden, quietly, "I can manage that. Good-by, then, till we meet again. I must go down now or I shall be too late. Is it straight down, through the woods?"

"Yes, you can't go wrong. Good-by. Dinner is at half-past seven." And he felt the palm of a warm, wet little hand in his for a moment, and all perception of uncouth garb and eccentric headgear vanished in the light of a pair of bright eyes looking full into his.

"By Jove! what a nice child!" he thought.

He was only just in time when the boat came in; long before the few passengers had landed, the slim figure of Cecil Raymond, arrayed in a long, light travelling coat, which was then the mode, was clearly discernible on the gangway, while the usual paraphernalia of a sportsman—the gun-case, rod, smart portmanteau, and railway-rug which was visible below—could have belonged to no one else on board. As swiftly as he was himself distinguished, did he distinguish Captain Bellenden of the First Life Guards, the principal guest and smartest man of the party assembled at a bachelor cousin's for the Ascot week the previous June.

Young Raymond had thought a great deal of being included in that party, had often since referred to it, and casually mentioned—as people will, you know—that Bellenden had been there.

He had not met Bellenden since, and the point now was, would Bellenden know him again.

Had the meeting taken place anywhere else, anywhere but in this lonely spot, he would hardly have expected recognition—but perhaps—and just as he was doubting and cogitating, his mind was set at rest in the most satisfactory manner possible. He was not only known but hailed, and hailed with remarkable cordiality and fervor, his hand warmly grasped, and his acquaintanceship

claimed without the slightest shade of hesitation. He had hardly ever been more gratified. He who had been the veriest nonentity at the Ascot meeting, who had not exchanged above a dozen or two sentences with the great man of the party, and who had felt the distance between him, a lad of nineteen in his first year at Oxford, and Captain Bellenden, a man of the world and certainly ten years, if not more, his senior, as quite immeasurable, now to be met on equal terms and in the easiest fashion! There could be but one solution of the problem.

"Stopping at my grandmother's, I suppose?" he suggested at once, with this thought in his mind, that some one must have sent the traveller there for a night's lodging on his way to more congenial haunts. Of course, Inchmarew Castle would always be a respectable place to send any one to, and some friend had probably given Bellenden an introduction, and—but Bellenden's first words dispelled the idea.

"Indeed, I am not so happy," he said, carelessly. "There is where I am stopping," pointing to the wretched little inn at the head of the pier. "I am on my way farther up the loch, and am fairly caught and landed here for the want of the means of proceeding." He then explained his sad plight more fully, though affecting to treat the whole as a jest, and without throwing out hint or suggestion of any possible amendment. "Oh, I shall do well enough," he concluded, "and I can get on to Kincraig first thing to-morrow; I only wish you would come and spend the evening with me. But you are going on to friends, I suppose?"

"To Inchmarew—over there—yes. I'll tell you what," said Cecil, suddenly, "you must really come there, too. You must indeed. There is no one but my grandmother, Mrs. Campbell, and my cousin, a little girl, to whom the place belongs. Mrs. Campbell is a most hospitable old

lady, and if I were to go up without you, directly I told her you were here it would only be a case of sending down the dog-cart at once. And, see, the rain is beginning again. It is going to be a beastly night. You had much better come up while it is only as slight as this; there will be a down-pour by and by. I can assure you, you may trust me that it will be all right."

"I—upon my word, you are too kind."

"Not at all. I am only my grandmother's spokesman. Here, you, Hector, get out Captain Bellenden's things from the inn, and put them into the dog-cart with mine. And, I say, tell Mrs. Maconochie it will be all right."

"But supposing the house is full?"

"Inchmarew full! Oh, you have not seen the castle yet. It is a huge place. But at present they have nobody, for my cousin is so young that they are living as quietly as possible."

"I have met your cousin already, and she gave me permission to fish in the stream. I have had a capital afternoon's trouting in consequence."

"Have you? I'm glad of that. If the boat had come in sooner, I had meant to run up to some of the high pools before dinner. I knew the water would be good."

"Your cousin kindly showed me the high pools herself."

"Really? Oh, you have met Geraldine, herself, then? Put the gun-case in here, Hector, along with mine. The portmanteau can go at William's feet, can't it? Any thing more? Rugs. Why, yes; they can stay here, if you like, but there's lots of room. Now, will you get up?" And the two mounted; and of so little consequence did it seem to be in young Raymond's eyes, whether or no his young cousin had been casually met for a passing minute, or had been spent the whole afternoon with, that Bellenden did not think it worth his while to inform him on the subject.

CHAPTER IV.

PLAYFELLOWS.

"'And which am I most like?' she said;
'Your Chloe, or your nut-brown maid?'"

Driving along, Cecil chatted merrily, with a sense of doing the honors natural to one who, as their nearest male relative, took the bottom of the table, inspected the kennels, and reported upon the stables, whenever he visited the ladies of Inchmarew.

He was now in the apologetic vein. The property, he confided, was being nursed at present. There was a good deal of retrenchment going on. The grounds were not kept as they had been. His grandmother had knocked off a lot of under-strappers and useless hangers-on. The gardens had been ridiculously expensive, and she had curtailed them considerably.

Of course, when his cousin came of age, these things would be different. She could then do as she chose; but, for the present, he thought his grandmother was very wise to spend as little as need be. It was not as if they were living in the world—with more of the kind.

To all this his companion cheerfully assented, as he would have done to almost any thing at the moment. The relief of getting away from the hovel, the thought of which had grown more insupportable than ever during the past half-hour, was so intense that he would have permitted Mrs. Campbell to knock off every gardener on the place, and curtail her expenditure in every direction, so long as he was given a decent dinner to eat and a decent bed to sleep in.

There was, however, no call for such indulgence. A

brief experience sufficed to show that the boyish brag of a youth, anxious to enhance the dignity of all connected with him, was on the present occasion making a great deal out of a very little. There might be retrenchment—there was certainly no discomfort nor disorder anywhere.

A respectable elderly major-domo stood in the doorway to receive the new arrival, and a trim lad in a quiet but neat livery ran down the steps, and began to take out the luggage with deft despatch. Mrs. Campbell, Mr. Raymond was informed, was in the drawing-room awaiting him, and Bellenden, who lingered for a moment affecting to be occupied with his belongings, but in reality to allow a moment for explanation, had soon the satisfaction of seeing the stately dame emerge from a distant doorway, escorted by her nephew, all eagerness to present his friend.

For an expected guest she could wait within the antechamber; but courtesy to a stranger, and one not assured of a welcome, sent her forth to meet him.

He felt at once all that he might now hope for. His own manner, always easy and engaging, at once rose with the occasion, and he bowed over the hand held out to him with the reverence of a courtier.

"He is charming," thought she. "Never was such luck," thought he. Each smiled at the other, and the good understanding was complete.

"It is going to be a very wet night, I fear," said Mrs. Campbell, glancing outside, as the raindrops now began to beat heavily against the tall narrow windows. "I fear, Cecil, that there is not much chance of your having a fine day for the moor to-morrow. I consulted our weather-wise old gardener, Macdonald, on the subject, and he shook his head. Unfortunately for you, we have had a long spell of fine weather; it has been really *too*

fine of late, and every one began to fear it could not last much longer. You know that August is never our best month, and one cannot expect summer weather to last forever."

"No, we can't, grandma." Cecil only smiled to himself, and only smiled to remember how often he had heard the same before. It seemed to him that he had heard it ever since he could remember—the time-worn apology for the mists of Inchmarew. And yet how dearly he loved the place and its inmates. Its very rains, and floods, and cloud-capped mountain-peaks, were sacred in his eyes, and he would not have let Bellenden into the secret of his infirmity for the world. Who could say but what the morrow might see glorious sunshine and melting warmth; and if so, why not have been prepared for it? "I have no doubt it will clear, by and by," he said, readily; "and let it rain as much as it will to-night, there's no harm done. Grandmamma, can we have a fire in the billiard-room this evening? I daresay Captain Bellenden would like a game of billiards after dinner."

"Certainly, my dear." And the order was given. "And let the fire be lit at once," added the old lady, anxious to do everything well. "The room may be a little damp," in explanation to Bellenden, "for it has not been used this summer."

"Not been used this summer! Good heavens!" inwardly ejaculated he. "And am I to play on a table not used this summer!" It was a blow, and he was only just able to avoid showing that it was one.

"I am afraid it will not be in a very good condition," continued Cecil Raymond, who was but a half degree more learned on the subject than his grandmother. "But you must make allowances; and, anyway, it's better than doing nothing."

"And, any way, it's a very great deal better than sitting in the midst of peat-reek and whiskey at the 'Ferry Inn'!" reflected his friend. And the thought restored his former equanimity as if by magic.

He had, as he was wont to say of himself, the knack of being civil. Accustomed to luxury, and courted by prosperity, he was yet of so happy a temperament that ill-fortune could not daunt nor adverse circumstances ruffle him. To escape either, he would, indeed, as we know, exert ingenuity and address; but, had these failed, no one would have heard more of the matter. He would have smoked a philosophical cigar, gone to bed, and proceeded on his journey the next day without an oath or a grumble. He was by no means a bad sort of fellow.

He now dressed himself for dinner serenely, with scarce a moment's regret for the services of the valet, who had been sent on to Kincraig by another and a swifter route, and whose absence had been a real satisfaction to his master, during the terrible anticipations of the afternoon. He was not by any means so dependent on the very fine gentleman as Monsieur Pierre supposed, and could calmly pack his own portmanteau, and put on his own coat, when compelled by necessity to do so.

By nature he was a very handsome man—and cared singularly little about it. By art he was a perfectly dressed man—and that, he considered, was every one else's business rather than his own. He went to the best tailor, hatter, hair-cutter, and boot-maker in town, and he could do no more. If the result were not satisfactory, it was no fault of his; and, in consequence, no misgiving nor uneasiness on the subject ever disturbed his mind.

Sooner than any other person he now descended to the drawing-room.

"Oh, I'm the first," he began, half aloud. "What has become of my little fisher-lassie, I wonder? Is she going to give me the slip? Or—stop; here she comes."

It was, however, no fisher-lassie who now appeared. It was the daintiest little maiden in the world, shy and rosy, half-pleased, half-frightened, and altogether charming, who advanced up the room. To be more exact, it was Jerry, in the very best Sunday frock she could muster, starched and crimped till it stood out on every side. Jerry, with the fleece of golden hair brushed and smoothed and shining, with a knot of pale rose ribbon nestling in the soft maze, with a little gold chain round her neck, and a thin gold band round her plump arm.

For the first time in her life she had been solicitous to look her very best. Her limpid eyes had gazed with deep and anxious interest into the old mirror on the wall, for many a year passed ignobly by, as unworthy even a passing glance; for once without a murmur she had submitted the tangled masses of her locks, Samson-like, to any fate that awaited them; and for once—tell it not again, oh, gentle reader!—for once had the little, brown, moist hands been not only passed in and out of the hot water in the basin, but had actually, laboriously, and thoroughly been cleansed to the finger-tips.

One of these was now offered to Bellenden with all the grace of a little hostess.

"I saw you coming up," she whispered. "I saw you two sitting together in the dog-cart, so then I knew it was all right. Until I really *saw* you, you know, I hardly hoped—I mean I really did not think you could—I mean I did not know whether you had been in time or not."

"I was only just in time."

"Were you, really? Should you have been too late in another minute?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Only fancy!" said Jerry, with large eyes. "And—and—supposing you had been, you would never have come?"

"No, indeed."

"Only fancy! What would you have done?"

"Stopped where I was."

"Only fancy! And never come up at all?"

"No, never," said Bellenden, as solemnly as she. Then there was a pause, on her part of satisfaction and relief, on his of wonder what was to come next. He was conscious of being both flattered and amused by Jerry.

"Did you tell Cecil about me?" was her next. And he fancied that even there, in that vast saloon, with space on every side, her voice sank.

"I told him that we had met."

"Did you say—how?"

"No Jerry, I did not say—how."

"Nor—nor where?"

"No. Nor where."

"You are laughing at me, but you do not know Cecil. If he had heard all about—about *it*, you know—to-day, you know—I mean your startling me, and——"

"And your crying."

"And your mistaking me——"

"And your snubbing me."

"And—and all——"

"And—and all," assented Bellenden—"our making up the quarrel, and becoming the best of friends, and fishing together, and walking home together, and conspiring together to make this very Cecil do the thing we both wished—if he had known of all this, now tell me what would Cecil have said to it?"

"I don't know; but"—and there was a flash from a

pair of unmistakably intelligent orbs—"I know this, I would rather not tell him."

Bellenden nodded, "We won't tell him."

"But I told granny, of course."

"Oh, of course. But how is it," continued the speaker, "how is it that Master Cecil commands such an amount of respect from his little cousin? Let me into the secret, Jerry, won't you?"

"Oh, I don't know. I don't know that there is any thing. Granny makes a fuss about Cecil. And he is very nice, you know. And his sisters think such a great, big, immense deal of him. They think there never was such a Cecil before. He is their only brother. Perhaps that's it. Sisters always do think that of brothers, don't they?"

"I wish I had a sister to think that of me."

"Have you not one?—not just a little one?" She was quite disappointed.

"Not even a little one. Not even a Jerry."

"Well, I have none either, and no brothers, nor any body. However, I don't mind," recovering. "I don't care much about girls, anyway, and if I could not have boys, I'd as soon only have granny."

"You do not care much for your Raymond cousins, then?"

"Oh, yes. But they always do give themselves such airs to me; and they talk French, and gabble about their governesses, and music-mistresses, and all that nonsense. They are well enough. But they can't ride," eagerly. "They think they can; and there is such a fuss about their horses, and their saddles, and their riding-habits; but once they are on, they go jogging up and down, not a bit close to the horse; and Ethel is in such a fright if her pony does but shy ever so little that she is in misery half the time; and they think they have done wonders if

they canter for half a mile at a time. I don't care for such riding as that!" Jerry wound up with superlative scorn.

"You like 'forty minutes on the grass without a check'—eh?"

"I like just as much as ever I can get—that's what I like. And to go—go—go like the wind. I am never tired. Ethel has to rest when she comes in, to lie down on a backboard, and not go out two days running."

"And what do they say to your style of performance?"

"Oh, I don't know. Jim—that's the groom—says he would like to come and be my groom here. And I shall have him, too—some day. He says he would like to take me to ride in the Row in London; and we'd show 'em how to do it. That was what Jim said," rather conscious of running on too fast. "I am only repeating what he said, you know."

From which it will appear that Jerry was an artless little woman after all, with a very naïve and transparent vanity, easily satisfied.

"Captain Bellenden," she began again presently.

"How do you know I am a captain?" he interrupted. "I only told you my name was Bellenden."

"Well, I saw it on your portmanteau," owned the little girl, truthfully; but although she stuck to the truth, he saw her bite her lip, and was sorry he had asked the question.

"Oh, that was it! And what were you going to say? You were going to say something."

"I was going to say—oh, I dare say I ought not to say it."

"Oh, yes, I'm sure you ought to say it."

"It was only——"

"Only what?"

"Only——"

"Well, what?"

"About sisters," said Jerry, as if she had said "about ghosts," or some such contraband articles.

"Sisters—eh? Well, but what about sisters?" He could not imagine anything very terrible to be said about sisters.

"It was just—whether—you would like to have any?"

"I should like it very much," said he promptly.

"Would you? Would you, really?" with eagerness.

"Really and truly."

"And—and—about how old?" demanded his little companion with increased anxiety; "about how old?"

"Let me see," said he pretending to reflect. "Let me see. Well, I think, perhaps, about fifteen. Yes, I think about fifteen."

"Fifteen? That's my age! Did you know? No, of course you did not. But it is. I am just fifteen."

"Indeed?"

"And—and—well?"

"About fifteen, and able to ride, and fish, and clamber up and down rocky banks, and make friends with castaway strangers, and have enchanted castles all ready to invite them up to, and long, yellow curls for them to pull when they come," and he was in the act of pulling the yellow curls before him, when the door opened, and Cecil Raymond entered.

CHAPTER V.

"CAN YOU TELL THE MEANINGS OF FLOWERS?"

He gave me a rose,
And he said, "Can you read
The alphabet dewy-eyed Flora invented
(So daintily tinted, and charmingly scented)
To write over valley and mead?"

It was just as well that Cecil did not see.

He was a grave young man, with somewhat pompous notions on most subjects, and in particular very exact views with regard to propriety and decorum.

Although he was fond of his own sisters, he never romped with them, nor made fun with them, nor giggled with them behind backs. His jests, when he made any, were solemn affairs, to be duly appreciated and recorded—but they were not such jests as children love. Little people had no freemasonry with him. And, in consequence, however kind, and attentive, and considerate the elder brother and cousin might be, he was in their hearts, perhaps, more respected than beloved, and wild little Jerry drew away as by instinct from Bellenden's touch when the door opened.

For herself, she was not in the least offended; it needed a good deal to put Jerry on her dignity as she had been put that afternoon; but she felt intuitively that Cecil would have looked askance upon the little bye-play.

Accordingly she now stepped up to him with the best imitation of her grandmother's reception manner which she could assume, and, moreover, with her small round face so demurely made up that he must have been a rogue indeed who would have ventured to associate it with pulling of curls or the like.

Bellenden's gay words were ringing in her ears nevertheless, and she was fain to have some more of them, and to get away from young Raymond as soon as she could; although, up to the present time, the annual visit of her cousin had been something to be looked forward to and counted upon, and he himself had been quite the personage of the hour. Now, and all at once, he was cast from his pedestal. He was no longer the first; and, from being the first, he had not even descended to a secondary place, but was hurled to the depths, a nobody, an incubus; all that the little lady by his side wanted being to cut short his opening sentences, and slip back to the seat in the window, wherein sat her new friend, quiet enough now, looking down upon the flower-beds below, and thinking of nothing less than of making an impression upon a susceptible, childish heart.

Jerry thought he looked beautiful sitting there, his handsome profile distinctly cut against the sky outside, and his fine easy figure half in, half out of the open casement, as his chin rested on his arm outside. She did not know how, but she felt—for she was a perceptive little creature—that there was a difference even between the suit of modest black worn alike by Cecil and by this stranger. Cecil was particular to a degree about his clothes; but, somehow, the *tout ensemble* of the other was just missed by him, and Jerry knew it. Poor little innocent thing! Her heart gave its first throb of a new and unknown nature as she watched that sharply-outlined, strongly-made, graceful form sitting so quietly there in the twilight. All in a moment, as we have said, Cecil became a burden intolerable.

"Well, Jerry, and what have you been about lately?" began he, as unconscious as a babe, and in the usual comprehensive style wherewith relations and intimates are fond of accosting each other after absence. "Riding

much—eh? How's the Flying Dutchman? Or have you got a new pony by this time?"

"Macalister is looking out for one. He says it will be best to wait for the Falkirk Tryst," replied Jerry, hoping that the subject was now disposed of.

"The Falkirk Tryst? Oh, I remember. A sort of market—eh?" and Cecil settled down upon it comfortably in spite of her concluding tone. "And so you are to get one, then?"

"Macalister says the best-bred animals are to be had there."

"'The best-bred animals!' That smacks of the stable, Miss Jerry—doesn't it, eh?"

"He says so," said Jerry, coloring more deeply than was her wont, and not disposed to pooh-pooh the correction, but rather to offer an excuse. "Macalister said so. I only repeat what he said, that you might know."

"I see," replied her cousin, kindly, for he had not meant to vex. "And this Falkirk Tryst—let me see—when does it come off?"

"In October," said Jerry, shortly. What could the Falkirk Tryst or anything about it matter to Cecil, that he should worry her about it just then? She made a restive movement to escape, but in vain.

"Well, the Dutchman has carried you gallantly for many a day," pursued her tormenter, heavily conversational, "so you will have to be compassionate toward him now. What are you going to do with him? Is he to be the wood pony, or for the moor? Or will you sell him?"

Here Mrs. Campbell entered, and made her way to Captain Bellenden's side.

"What is to become of him?" pursued Cecil.

("How tiresome! Now he will begin talking to grandmamma, and I shan't have another word from him.

What a shame!" muttered the child to herself, little accustomed to be thwarted even in a trifle. "How Cecil does prose! How provoking and stupid he is!")

"What is to become of him?" demanded Cecil for the third time.

But he never knew, for dinner was announced at the moment, and Jerry was storming inwardly with baffled indignation and righteous wrath.

("There, now, I knew how it would be. I knew that if grandmamma was standing away there with him when dinner was announced, she would tell him to take her in, though I *know* she ought to have had Cecil. She ought to have had Cecil, of course. She should have left Captain Bellenden for me, and then he would have come up to me, and offered me his arm—oh, delightful.")

She had never taken anybody's arm in her life. Truth to tell, she had been casting about in her mind, ever since she had seen Bellenden's portmanteau safe in the hall, the chances of this great event happening to her now. Hitherto she had been glad enough to avoid the formal late dinner when her grandmother had had guests at Inchmarew. She had either made her appearance with the dessert, or had more commonly chosen to run about till bedtime, and then have some supper brought up to her old nursery, by these means escaping both the company and the evening frock. She had, however, on the present occasion carefully intimated her intention of dining late in future, and Mrs. Campbell, in common with the rest of the household, had been too glad to see in the change the dawn of advancing womanhood to make any sort of demur.

So much arranged, one soul-absorbing anxiety had occupied the little girl's mind, and that was in reference to her being handed to the dining-room by Bellenden.

The more she had thought about it the more eager and anxious she had become, as was Jerry's way whenever any desire once took possession of her little excitable breast.

To take his arm! To step grandly along before everybody, like a real grown-up young lady—how enchanting.

She did not stop to remember that it had never struck her as enchanting, but rather in a reverse light, hitherto. It would, at any rate, be simply heavenly now.

And of course it was her right to lead the way and do honor to the stranger guest in her own castle. Granny had often told her that she ought to prepare to take her place as mistress and head of all ere long—so perhaps, indeed most certainly, granny would think this a good opportunity for her to begin. It would also instruct Captain Bellenden in her position and her rights, and make his blunder of the afternoon all the more astonishing and ridiculous to his recollection.

He might perform his part of the ceremony with a twinkle in his eye, and Jerry would not have freed him from a sly reminiscence as he and she marched through the long gallery together; but, carry it off as he might, he could not fail to feel a little foolish, and might be trusted to be as discreet as herself before spectators.

All of this had been carefully thought out during the putting on of the white frock and rose-colored sash, and there had been just enough uncertainty about the desired programme being carried out to make Cecil's detention doubly irksome and ill-timed—since the fact of her being beside him and away from the other was, she could not help fearing, sure to tell against her.

It might, or it might not, have done so. The probability is that Mrs. Campbell gave the subject no thought at all, and as a matter-of-course went in, as she had always done before, with her principal guest; but it was

Cecil's doing in Jerry's eyes; and, as the naughty little girl had never yet learned to control or conceal her feelings, a very sulky and unresponsive companion the poor fellow had, and one who would have gladly given the arm she held a good hard pinch, instead of delicately touching it with the tips of her fingers, as she knew she ought to do.

Granny perceived that something was wrong directly they emerged into the light, for the lamps were all lit in the dining-room, and revealed the bonny brow black as night, and the rosebud mouth unmistakably drawn down at the corners—and for the life of her the kind old lady could not think what was at the bottom of it; but presently she observed with relief that there was an effort to throw off the cloud; and when at length, though not for awhile, in response to some merry story told across the table for her especial benefit, Jerry's own bell-like laugh rang out again, high and clear, and sweet as a young bird's, she was so rejoiced to hear it that she forgot to note that the transformation was neither due to any efforts of her own nor of her grandson.

To Cecil, indeed, Jerry was all shoulder.

She had no eyes nor ears for him until after that laugh had brought her out of her mood; and Bellenden himself could not have been conscious of the blazing radiance of the eyes which so continuously sought his, and of their ready response to every approach he made.

"By Jove, she will be a beauty one of these days!" he told himself. "By Jove, Master Raymond, you had better be well forward in the field before more of the pack open cry! The little heiress will be a prize worth the running for. Had I been a dozen years younger—but, however, I am not a marrying man, or I should have been done for long ago. Luckily, I don't need to go heiress-hunting either."

And so it was that he merely felt pleased and a little touched by the sparkling young face opposite, pleased to find himself still capable of attracting, and touched by the artlessness with which the attraction was confessed. "A dear little thing," he owned in the end; "and upon my word I said no more than the truth when I told her I wished I had just such another little sister."

They had a merry evening after that.

The billiard-table was so atrociously bad that Captain Bellenden, who was a noted player, found it humorous in the extreme never to have the ghost of an idea where his ball would go, nor what would be the effect of his finest strokes. He roared with good humored laughter when his simplest cannons missed, and when pockets that should have been certainties jilted him in the most barefaced manner. His mirth was so spontaneous and infectious that no one could resist it; and, without knowing in the least why, granny and grand-daughter laughed almost as much and as heartily as he, while Cecil, who would have felt aggrieved and discomfited had anyone else made such fun of the whole, consoled his dignity with the reflection that Bellenden had never been used to any but the most unexceptionable of billiard-tables, and that he must therefore be considered as highly indulgent in that he condescended to handle a cue at all upon this occasion.

"But why should we have it all to ourselves?" suggested the gay guardsman at last. "Pray, Mrs. Campbell, join us. You have been so good in coming here, and I know my little friend," with a glance at Jerry, "is longing for a game. What shall it be? Pool? Or, let me see, I know the thing she would like. Battle, that's it? Did you ever play battle, Jerry? Come and play with me, then. Beg your grandmamma to take a hand, and we shall be two to two."

Perhaps he was beginning to tire of the other play, perhaps it was in mere compassion to the eager little face so wistfully following its progress, that the suggestion was made; but, at any rate, it was received with rapture.

"I can play battle, I can, indeed," almost shrieked the little girl in her excitement. "I have played it at Uncle Raymond's; we played it the very last time I was there; and Ethel, and Alicia, and I all played; didn't we, Cecil? Don't you remember, Cecil?" Cecil's misdemeanor was by this time forgotten. "Oh, granny, do say 'Yes,'" proceeded the small speaker, dancing in front of the smiling and indulgent granny. "Do get out of your chair, and come, there's a dear granny; and if you don't know the game, we can all teach you," and then, as granny obediently rose, off bustled Geraldine to the stand, took down the cues, and examined their tips—the half of these were off—selected a very narrow one for herself, and a very broad one for granny, by way of granny's being the novice, and finally stood by Bellenden's side, the picture of happiness and pride.

All of this was diverting to people willing to be diverted, and benevolent; and then, behold! what should appear but that granny, who knew nothing about the requirements of billiard-rooms and tables, could nevertheless handle her cue, and hit a ball on the desired side, and not be overcome with astonishment when it went the way it should go! She was in fact a far superior performer to the prancing Jerry, and the latter would have been mortified, as well as amazed, by the prowess of so unexpected a rival, had granny's proficiency not placed it beyond a doubt that for the remainder of the evening the old lady must stick to Cecil for a partner, leaving the more accomplished Bellenden for herself.

Do what she would, Jerry could not bring back her balls.

Her instructor was good-nature itself; and he cheered and consoled, and with infinite skill repaired the damage done their side as fast as she could inflict it; but, nevertheless, they lost oftener than they won, and she resolved to practice in secret, and never to run the risk of doing herself such discredit in his eyes again.

Things brightened afresh, however, thereafter.

Captain Bellenden performed feats—feats which, it is true, did not invariably come off as they were intended, and which none but an expert would have ventured upon at all; but he showed how he could have done this and that, and Cecil vouched for the fact that he had actually seen the complication worked, so that it was almost as good as beholding for themselves.

Jerry's bedtime had long gone by; but it was not in fond granddame's heart to put an end to her darling's pleasure. She so seldom either wished or cared to sit up late, and it was so evidently a delight on this one rare occasion, that, "It cannot harm her for once and away," thought the old lady.

Alack! Granny did not take into consideration that there are two kinds of harm. As to that to which she alluded, she was, perhaps, right; but about the other, oh, Jerry, pretty nestling, why were you not sleeping soundly in your little bed hours ago, dreaming of brawling brook and leaping trout, or of wild wet gallops along the sea road, rather than watching, with eyes all ablaze, and hearkening, with ears all in a tingle, to every thing this too delightful stranger did and said?

He left the next day.

It rained, as foretold, and he was pressed to remain, but did not do so.

Personally he would gladly enough have stayed in such good quarters, and sent over the note to Kincraig which young Raymond urged him to write; but he did

not feel that the thing could be done. That sort of freedom with a house to which he had only been received under stress of adverse circumstances he was not the man to take, and with a firmness which Mrs. Campbell in her heart applauded, and which even Cecil felt to be correct and gentlemanly, he adhered to his resolution.

Would he then return? Would he pay them a real visit? Shoot their moor? And in particular have some sea-fishing on the bank below the house, to the description of which he had listened with so much appreciation? The fishing was going on nightly at present.

Granny spoke; but Jerry looked a thousand urgencies, and her silence was even more effectual than the other's pleadings. Bellenden really hardly knew how to manage it, for his time was already mapped out for the autumn; but somehow he could not resist. In his heart he thought he knew whom he could throw over, and from whence he could scrimp a few days. His doubtful brow cleared, and he gave the promise required. They were really too kind, and the inducements altogether were really too tempting; he would certainly come, and would write from Kincraig.

In a few days the letter came.

It was all that Cecil, but perhaps not quite all that Jerry had hoped for. She, poor child, had been feverishly expectant as every post came in, and many a boat had she watched crossing the loch, unknown to all beside. She had fancied he might come at any time, and the days had seemed long and profitless, though hope had started afresh with each returning morn.

In reality, Bellenden wrote quite wonderfully soon for him. He had a very pleasant recollection of a charming little adventure, and was quite willing to follow it up

and see more of his new friends; but long days on the moor are not conducive to letter-writing, and he did not quite know what to say or to fix.

At last, however, he could make a definite proposal, and it was one which, as we have said, Cecil found agreeable enough. He did not primarily offer his own return to Inchmarew, but in the name of his host he requested young Raymond's company at Kincraig, where there was a bachelor party assembled, and just one room vacant. Raymond was asked to come and fill it.

The postscript, however, was of more importance to one doleful listener.

"If you can come, and if Mrs. Campbell will permit me, I will do myself the pleasure of accompanying you back to Inchmarew on your return, and will spend two nights with you."

So it ran.

"Only two nights!" exclaimed poor Jerry, in such heartrending accents that both her auditors laughed.

"He would be flattered if he could hear you, my little coz," cried Cecil, gaily, for he was in spirits to be gay. "It would not do to tell him, or his head might be turned. But I think I had better go," he added, turning to his grandmother. "I think it would hardly be civil to refuse, and I should have had to shoot some time or other at Kincraig anyway."

"And Archie Kincraig will have to shoot here," rejoined Mrs. Campbell, well versed in moor etiquette. "Had you not better bring him back with you, also, Cecil?"

"Oh, no," cried Jerry, interposing with a frown. "Oh, *no*, granny. Oh, how can you say so?"

"Why not?" Granny looked, as she felt, surprised; for, as a rule, the said Archie was rather a favorite with her young granddaughter than otherwise, and was one

of the few whose welcome at Inchmarew was always assured.

"Oh, we don't want him," Jerry said now, however. "He will only be in the way. Let him come at another time—later on, when there is—nobody else. We don't want so many at one time, do we, Cecil?"

"He could not leave his own men if we did," said Cecil. "You see, Bellenden says there is a party"—his own eyes brightening at the word, for at his age to be invited to make one of a party of bachelors is a distinction, and he remembered the Ascot week, and thought on what a much higher level he should stand now than he had done then—"no doubt the party will be kept up by relays through the next few weeks," he continued. "I am only surprised that he allows Bellenden to leave so soon, for he is not likely to have many such crack shots."

He did not know that the especial crack shot referred to was not over and above well pleased either with his moor or his company. Bellenden had reflected that in all probability the shooting retained by the Campbells was much better than that let to his host; that the people got together in the shooting-box were a so-so scratch lot, not to his taste; and, moreover, that the cookery was tasteless, and his bedroom small and stuffy—so that the recollection of his evening at the old castle on the other side of the loch had grown pleasanter day by day in contrast to his present surroundings.

To shoot with Cecil Raymond, who, if he were but a boy and a priggish boy, was still a gentleman and a nice sort of fellow—(whereas the fellows assembled at Kincraig were, as a rule, of another sort)—to dine with the dear old lady, who had made herself quite charming to him, and with whom he had plenty of topics in common, for she was by no means as completely out of the world

he moved in, for all the recluse life she was leading now, as were the youths at Kincraig; and to frolic with the pretty, apt, responsive little heiress, the jolly mischievous sprite who was so unmistakably his chief friend of all, would, Captain Bellenden felt, suit him much better than this forced intercourse with a second-rate set of rather rowdy bachelors.

Accordingly he had made his host—as he well knew how to do—invite young Raymond, and had added to the invitation his own postscript.

All went well.

Cecil certainly shone by contrast at the shooting-lodge. He might not appear to advantage when contrasted with Bellenden, and with Bellenden only; but he was several cuts above Archie Kincraig's friends, and this he could not help himself perceiving.

It seemed only natural to him that he and Bellenden should herd together as it were, in consequence, that they should fall to talking confidentially, imparting to each other their verdicts and grievances, and seeking one another's sympathy. Bellenden owned that the company was not to his mind—Cecil turned up his nose at it still more. Bellenden whispered that the sport was bad—Cecil called it abominable. Bellenden suggested that they should be off on the day but one following--Cecil despatched a messenger to stop the early boat, in order that they might start the first thing after breakfast. When the two arrived at Inchmarew they had advanced in intimacy by seven-league strides.

On this occasion Jerry was not nearly so demonstrative as she had been before. She had had time to think, and to be shy of her own thoughts. She, too, had been growing fast within the last two or three days, growing even since Cecil's departure, growing in a strange new knowledge which had to be kept all to herself. She was going

now to be careful, and not to run the risk of Cecil's teasing, and granny's smiles, any more.

She was already dressed and waiting, however, when the dog-cart drove up to the door, and had a pretty bunch of flowers at her throat; and as she came somewhat soberly forward to do her part of welcome, Cecil thought he had never beheld his young cousin to greater advantage.

Perhaps Bellenden was not quite of the same opinion. Perhaps he would have preferred a step and carriage less sedate, a countenance less composed. Certain it is that he experienced a momentary check, a feeling of surprise and doubt, and that his own manner shadowed this forth on the instant.

But presently he saw through it only too well. It was but a passing womanliness, an evanescent emotion of the bashful kind, and it soon gave way. Ere half an hour had elapsed, the two were chattering and bandying jest and repartee as freely together as they had ever done, and he was no more on his guard.

At dinner-time, or rather at dressing-time, he found flowers in his room.

So did Cecil; for Jerry, with this new-born touch of modesty about her would make no distinctions; but her cousin did not know that his were of the baser, Bellenden's of the choicer sort. He came down with a rose-bud in his button-hole. Bellenden had selected a spray of purple heliotrope, and was whispering to the fair giver something which bore evident reference to the same, when they were interrupted. Her cheeks were not less scarlet than the scarlet blossoms on her breast as she hung her head to listen, and Cecil might have seen—but Cecil saw nothing.

When the young man had formed his ideas on any given subject, it required an agency little short of super-

natural to uproot them, and his calm conviction of Geraldine's extreme youth and devotion to himself carried him through all evidence of a contrary nature.

Jerry was a nice little girl. By and by he should perhaps marry her. That was the sum total of his thoughts.

As for there being any thing between the magnificent Bellenden, and the little, wild, unformed Highland lassie, the very idea would have been absurd and preposterous in his eyes—at this time, at least.

He therefore had no hesitation about walking straight up the room, and, as we have said, neither saw nor heard anything.

"Have you said 'Thank you' for your pretty bouquet?" inquired Bellenden, with an air of having done so himself. "And can you interpret the hidden language of flowers, Raymond? Because unless you can you are not worthy to receive them, and so I have been saying to your cousin."

So that was what he had been saying.

Looking at him, and at Geraldine, and at the piece of fragrant heliotrope, whose amorous significance young Cecil all at once called to mind, it did just occur to the latter, unsuspicious as he had been half a minute before, that perhaps, all things considered, it might have been as well to have left the words unsaid.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PIECE OF WHITE HEATHER.

" For whom should I the garland make,
But her who joys the gift to take,
And boasts she wears it for my sake ? "

But Jerry, as before, found nothing amiss.

She went to bed that night with the foolish whisper tingling in her ears and buzzing through her little head. She mentally resolved to secrete that piece of heliotrope —it was sure to be lying somewhere about Bellenden's room in the morning—and keep it forever for his sake. She sat and gazed into the depths of the quaint old mirror, now at last appreciated, the while she twisted up the golden curls and hung them this way and that way about her fair forehead ; by many a device she sought to catch glimpses here and there of nose, and chin, and mouth, wondering and seeking to divine of what account they were—those all unknown, unexplored possessions of hers —in his eyes ! Did he think her pretty ? Would he have liked her to be prettier, or taller ? Would he have thought more of her had she been as tall as Ethel or Alicia ? Would he have said to them the same pleasant things he was forever saying to her ?

And the vain little heart counted over one by one her treasures as she yet longed for more, and the little white-robed figure grew cold and chilly as she sat there, a small spot in the great dim bedroom, thinking and thinking, and never a bit the wiser for it.

She had softly got out of the bed and relit her candle after the maid had left, and it was long ere the faint light it shed was finally extinguished ; but at length the show

was over, and in she crept again beneath the silken coverlet, courting sleep, to find that he had taken to himself wings and fled, only to return by fits and starts to her poor little hot, feverish pillow.

The following morning Cecil and his friend were to be off to the moor at break or nearly at break of day, and Jerry had been told that her "Good-night" to them might stand for her "Good-morning" also, since they would be miles away among the heather ere her eyes had unclosed next day.

But could she sleep? While all the stir was going on, while dogs were barking and keepers shouting, and the breakfast bustling along the passages, the whole place, as it were, agog without and within? Was it likely?

It would be excuse sufficient in her grandmother's mind that she had been aroused by all the noise and commotion, and that, once thoroughly awakened, she could not help getting up and coming down to preside at the breakfast-table. Neither granny nor Cecil could scold once the thing were done—though the artful little minx had the wit to keep her own counsel beforehand—and accordingly, when daylight began to spread across the heavens, and long, long before she need have been thinking about it, up she rose, stealthily bathed her burning cheeks, on tiptoe performed her hasty toilet, and hushed even her gentlest movements if a step went by, lest perchance they should betray her. It would have been terrible to have been found out with her purpose unachieved.

The breakfast was to be on the table at half-past six o'clock, and by six Jerry was fully dressed and all impatience, so that a weary half-hour had to be dragged through by her poor little fasting frame and tumultuous spirit first.

She sat down to wait by the open window.

It was a heavenly morning, warm even at that early hour, and breathlessly still. Not a ripple stirred the glassy waters of the loch beneath, nor moved the few white fleecy cloudlets which were scarcely visible, hung high in the blue expanse overhead.

The tide was at its lowest, and flocks of sea-birds crowded the sandy bays and headlands, wading, feeding, and chattering.

A herring "skow" was hanging out its brown sail to dry close to the shore, yet not so close but that its long straight shadow lay upon the motionless water beneath. A wreath of blue smoke arising from the deck was also mirrored in the water, showing that others were astir as well as the inmates of the castle hard by, and presently the little watcher from her turret could perceive the fishermen themselves upon the deck, busy in preparations for the day's work.

How she wished that she and Bellenden and Cecil had been going aboard the little vessel, going to sail away and away on the blue water, when the in-flowing tide should raise breeze enough to waft her on her course, and when they could hang over the side, by and by, drawing in the shy cod, or the silvery whiting, or whatever came first. Cecil had promised that she should go with them the very first night he took his friend out, but it could not be that night, she knew; and now that the shooting had begun in real earnest—and there had been a great deal of talking about it the evening before, and arrangements for shooting this ground and that ground, which betokened every day being filled up, even though Captain Bellenden had under pressure extended the proposed length of his stay from two to four or five days—now that all this was in store, who could say when a spare night would be found for the whiting bank.

The fine weather had evidently set in, when Cecil

would certainly prefer shooting to sea-fishing, and shooting meant being out very late, and returning home very tired, and quite disinclined to stir a foot outside again. For a great part of the Inchmarew moor lay at a distance from the castle, and moreover, like most Argyleshire moors, there was a considerable area to be traversed if any thing like good sport were to be obtained. Young Raymond was often so weary at the close of the day as to be fit for nothing but his bed after supper. Supper would be somewhere between nine and ten o'clock, and was not called, or thought of, as dinner, as at some places. Mrs. Campbell, if alone, would have had her dinner at its usual time, and Cecil would sup by himself when he came in; but if he had others with him the old lady would join the party for the sake of sociability, and turn the whole into a merry meal, though she would not allow a succession of courses at that hour, and still adhered to the old-fashioned, homely name in word as well as in deed.

Now, by half-past nine o'clock Jerry ought to be safe and sound tucked up within her little bed; her hour for leaving the drawing-room was nine, and she was allowed half an hour for undressing—and never but on that one occasion of the billiard match had the evening summons been allowed to pass unheeded. Something in her grandmother's look had sent the little girl quietly off the night before. Jerry, we have said, was a child of quick perceptions, and, without a word having been said, she understood perfectly that granny was not entirely pleased about something or other, and that it would be wiser not to risk any advances just then. Her conscience was just shaky enough to give rise to an unwonted timidity with both granny and Cecil, and she was inclined to be conciliatory and deferential, and every thing that they could wish, in the hope of being kept in favor.

But oh! this supper. She had heard the order given, and the hour named, and ever since what tortures of anxiety had been hers! To say any thing about the matter beforehand would be most certainly to spoil all, since on some points her grandmother could make a stand even against herself, and Jerry's bedtime had been one of those points on which the old lady had, with the single exception above narrated, been inflexible. Jerry had weakly, as she now considered, given in about it at the first—the truth being that she had not cared about the matter, since evenings alone with granny had not been amusing enough to excite an effort, and neither had Cecil's friends, when they had been present, done much toward public enlivenment. They had usually remained in the dining-room or gone off to the smoking-room, even if they had returned tolerably early from the moor—and on other days she had not seen them at all. Then granny's visitors had been wont to sit solemnly round, and yarn, or play the piano, and talk in whispers. There had been no games, no fun, no any thing. Even granny, herself, who was not a bit too old for these, had owned she got on better with young folks than with her own contemporaries.

It was not then to be supposed that they could be of any sort of value to the fourteen or fifteen year-old little girl, and she had never experienced either hopes or fears connected with them.

Captain Bellenden, was, oh! how different. He had talked to her, told her stories, asked all about herself, and her likings and dislikings, and confided about himself and his likings and dislikings. She had got to know a great deal about him, and felt as if he had taken pains to know about her. They had had a long ramble during the previous afternoon, and she had shown him her gardens, her grounds, her stables and kennels, her home-farm and dairy, and several of her favorite haunts. He had

seemed to care to see them all, and to hear about them all. He had seemed to like everything about Inchmarew, and presently he had produced a little sketch which he had taken of the castle turret from a point high up on the Kincraig moor, and which he had thought it would please its little mistress to possess. Her surprise and gratitude had touched him, and, in presenting it, he had allowed himself to say another of those pretty sayings which he would only have ventured on with such a child.

Here, we may just remark, for the enlightenment of our readers, that Bellenden was not a flirting man, and, curiously enough, had never been in love in his life. Perhaps the world had opened its arms too wide to him—it does sometimes.

But here was a pleasant little plaything, with whom he might be as pleasant as he chose in return, and he had had no fears, and meant no harm. He had, moreover, found Jerry's companionship so preferable to that of the Kincraig party, none of whom were of his set, or knew his haunts, or could talk his talk, that he had been ready to make still more of her than he might have done otherwise, and had, in consequence, wrought infinitely more damage.

She was now full of him, cared only for his notice, burned only to be in his presence.

Well, she had secured the breakfast time anyway, and more, had secured it for herself. Granny absent, Bellenden would have no one to claim his attention but herself (for he did not greatly favor Cecil when others were by), besides which, Cecil would be sure to be pretty fully occupied with the business in hand, the calls on him made by one and another, the bustle of preparation, and the start. She knew how it would be with him. For once and again ere now she had got up to this early

shooting breakfast, on the hot August days, when it was a novelty, and had let her loose to run about for a while before the sun was too high—and she meant to make the most of those occasions now, should a remark be passed on her appearing.

None was—of an adverse nature.

Bellenden, indeed, looked surprised, but it was mere genuine astonishment, quite untinged with reproach.

"You *are* a good girl!" he exclaimed, heartily. "Are you always up with the lark, like this? By Jove, you ought to be coming with us. How you would enjoy it! I wish we had thought of that before—but perhaps it is not too late, now. What do you say? Will you come?"

"Oh-h-h!" Jerry drew in a breath, and could say no more.

"I'll take care of you if your cousin sees no objection," proceeded he. "I dare say there is a hill pony somewhere that could be pressed into your service, and if you grew tired by the middle of the day, you could be sent home with a keeper. What do you think?"

"Think! Why, *of course* I could have a pony, and *of course* I could go, if only granny and Cecil will let me," almost sobbed Geraldine, trembling with excitement and anxiety. "Oh, if they only will! But I am afraid they never, never will. Granny has a perfect horror of 'shooting ladies,' as she calls them."

"But one day on the moor could hardly turn you into a 'shooting lady,' or else I don't think I should ask for it myself," quoth Bellenden. "I think your grandmamma might allow it just for once," and as, apart from his desire to please her, he experienced a feeling that her company would be an agreeable addition to that of the young Oxonian, he spoke with an earnestness which showed he meant to be taken at his word.

"What is it you are in doubt about, Bellenden?" said

Cecil, entering at the moment; "any thing I can get you?"

"Why, yes; get permission for this little lady to ride alongside of us on the moor. Don't you think she might? She would be in no one's way; and I dare say she is quite as good for a long day among the grouse as the best of us."

"Impossible!" said Cecil, with a look of amazement. "My grandmother would never hear of such a thing. Why, Jerry, surely you did not propose it? Was that why you got up?"

"No, *indeed*," cried Jerry, almost in tears; "*indeed* I never thought of it, Cecil. Really and truthfully I did not. I only got up to see you off. You know," she added, coloring and hesitating ever so little, "you know I do often see you off."

"Not very often. But—well?"

"And Captain Bellenden thought that—that perhaps I might go, too, if granny and you did not mind."

"My grandmother would most certainly object. She would never hear of it," said Cecil to him.

"But, really, would she not? Ladies do go out, you know; and—and——"

"Oh, yes; *some* ladies do, certainly. Not those of our family," said Cecil, with all the stiffness of the Raymonds, dead and alive, on the subject; "it is the last thing we should ever wish them to do."

"She is such a child," murmured Bellenden, apart to him, "and different from other children, too. She must have but few pleasures in this lonely place; why deny one on the mere score of propriety?"

"You own it would be improper?"

"Not at all, for a little girl like her. It would be different if she were a few years older. At present it could surely do her no harm."

"Oh, no 'harm,' I dare say. However it is not for me to say either 'yes' or 'no.' I do not think my grandmother at all likely to consent; but, of course, Jerry can ask her——"

"And may I say you will take care of me?" Jerry was on the wing instantaneously.

"No—say *I* will," cried Bellenden, laughing. And somehow Cecil thought of the heliotrope as he looked at him, and from him to Geraldine.

It proved that he knew his grandmother best. She was shocked, almost incredulous, could hardly believe that a man who knew the world as Captain Bellenden did could have made such a proposition, and assured his messenger with many an ominous shake of the head that it was no compliment to her at her age to be considered too young to be at all in the way by young men who wanted to smoke, and talk, and shoot. If Captain Bellenden thought of her in that light it meant that she was to be no restraint upon them, and that they might go on just as freely together as though she were not there; and how would she like that? She little knew how uncomfortable it would make her feel. Young women who respected themselves should *always* be a restraint after a fashion upon young men, and Jerry was really growing to be a young woman, now, and ought to feel as one.

She took it very ill of Captain Bellenden, the old lady further proceeded, to have mooted such an idea, an idea that but for him would never have entered Jerry's head—and, indeed, she had meant to tell Jerry to be a little more careful, and not to run on quite so fast with her tongue when Bellenden was by, in case he took it into his mind that she was wilder and more untamed than she really was; this suggestion of his showed that her caution would have been a wise one—and so on, and so on, until the poor little girl, ashamed, aggrieved, and

bitterly repentant, all at once broke out into an agony of sobs and tears, and rushed from the room, seeking only to be unseen and unspoken to any more.

Go down again? Not for worlds. Her own chamber, and behind a fast-locked door, was the one place for her now.

"It is of no use waiting for Geraldine," quoth Cecil, calmly rising at last to go. "I expect she has been ordered back to bed. She is an excitable little thing, and had no business to be up at all at this hour. As to her going with us, I knew my grandmother would never hear of it."

"Poor child, I hope I have not got her into a scrape," replied Bellenden.

But he had forgotten all about it when he came home at night, and Jerry needed not to have wasted a single miserable moment on the oft-repeated query: "What must he have thought?"

She had had a bad day, but it had borne some fruits, even such fruits as she could herself appreciate; for granny, reflecting that the child had been less to blame than appeared, and that it had been only natural that she should jump at a proposal so entirely in accordance with her tastes, felt pitiful and compassionate, and set about speedily to consider what she should do to "make up" to her darling for the past.

Then the bright idea occurred to her that Jerry should sit up to the late supper, should be exhorted to be very quiet and sedate, and told that she would thus prove to Captain Bellenden, in the most satisfactory manner, that she was emerging from the chrysalis state, and was, in fact, upon the very confines of butterflyhood.

Jerry wiped her eyes, which had begun to brim afresh at the first words, when it came to this point.

To sit up to the late supper would certainly be a great

thing, next best if not quite as good as going out on the moor, and though, to be sure, the latter *might* have entailed the former, there was no absolute certainty that it would have done so. Had she been allowed to go with her cousin and his friend, it was quite possible that granny might have sent for her about midday, in which case she would assuredly have lost all chance of the evening treat, since she could hardly have faced her grandmother with two unwonted requests in one day. The point would then have been, which to choose between?

But here was granny herself proposing the supper, and proposing it in the kindest manner, placing, as it were, the gentlest of fingers on a tender spot.

Granny was sure, she said, that Captain Bellenden had meant no harm; he had only been thoughtless; he had no little sisters of his own, and did not know about them. Granny was sorry she had spoken so strongly, and hoped no more would be thought about it. It had been quite right of Jerry not to go down again. And now she should not say anything to their guest (immense relief on Jerry's part), and nothing more need be heard of the matter.

A small hand stole into hers at this point. The old lady fondled it, and understood its meaning.

A sense of subdued comfort and gladness stole into the child's breast, and filled it to overflowing, presently. The agony of shame, vexation, and disappointment had left it sore and aching, even when the first throes had passed; but now, as evening approached, hope again lifted up its head.

She was to sit up late, and have her place laid at table. She was to put on her longest frock, and be in the drawing-room by granny's side when the gentlemen came in, and she need not give any explanation of her not returning to the breakfast-table, as it would be quite suffi-

cient to reply to any inquiry that granny had not wished her to go out.

To all of this Jerry meekly assented; and presently granny had the satisfaction of hearing her cheerful little tongue prattling away again as if nothing had happened.

"A piece of white heather from the ptarmigan peaks," cried Bellenden, gaily, coming in in the dusk with it in his hand. "From the very topmost height of your lands, fair lady," holding out the sprig toward Geraldine. "I knew that I should find some, though Raymond said not. Will you then accept as a gift what you could claim as a right?"

She took it shyly.

"We have had such a day, Mrs. Campbell," continued the speaker, with animation, "such a glorious, unrivalled day. A day ever to be remembered. It has made up for a hundred bad weeks such as the last. We have slain our thousands, and we have walked our leagues, and we have seen such sights, such stretches of moor upon moor, and mountain upon mountain, and so many sea-lochs, each like a separate ocean, with its own little fleet of herring boats, and its own village of fishermen's cottages—oh! we have had a grand day altogether. I shall never forget it. I can never hope for such another."

Then he glanced at his other auditor, who was mutely listening, but not looking at him. All at once he recollected and understood.

"I am afraid there is no doubt that I was in the wrong about your coming, Jerry," he owned, frankly. "You see I had no idea of what it was going to be like. The ground we went over was much too rough for any pony, and was pretty severe even on Raymond and me. I hope you did not think me very crazy to have proposed it, Mrs. Campbell," turning to the old lady, "but you

see moors differ so, and that at Kincraig was easy walking. Just where we had our luncheon, however, there was a path, and I believe the boy and pony came up by it. We are to lunch at the same place to-morrow. Now, could we not induce you to come up? That would atone to my little friend here for my unfortunate suggestion of the morning. What do you think?"

"I will think about it, Captain Bellenden."

"You do ride, I know," continued he. "I saw your excellent pony in the stables yesterday. Oh, he would carry you up that path."

"Granny has often been up it," interposed a small voice, unable to hold back any longer. "Granny and I have had our luncheon often at the very place, haven't we, dear? And she does not mind any mountain path, I can tell you, Captain Bellenden."

"It certainly sounds very pleasant," subjoined granny for herself, "and if to-morrow should be as fine as to-day——"

"Of course fine weather is a necessity for such an expedition," assented its proposer, readily; "but we are going to have a long spell of fine weather now, every one is agreed, and so we may hope for the best," and he went gaily off to make ready for the evening.

When he came back, only Jerry was in the drawing-room; Mrs. Campbell had been called away, and Cecil had not yet come down.

He looked round, then walked straight up to the little girl's side.

"Was it very bad this morning?" he whispered. "Did I let you in for a scolding, Jerry?"

Her bosom heaved.

"Poor little thing!" said he, penitently. "I am so sorry. It was all my fault. They were quite right, you know, your grandmamma and cousin. It would really

never have done, and I ought never to have set you on to ask them. I am awful sorry——"

"Oh, it—it doesn't matter."

"No one is angry with *you* I hope?"

"Oh, no—not now."

"I am so sorry, so awfully sorry. You do forgive me, don't you, though?" continued Bellenden, who really had no idea how softly and tenderly he was speaking. He was, as he said, so very sorry; and he had a strong suspicion that his sorrow was not undeserved. He could perceive traces of a struggle and of emotions not yet entirely within check upon the childish countenance cast down before him, and felt sure that more had happened than she would own. Involuntarily his hand took hers and held it.

"You do forgive me, don't you?" he said again.

She had barely time to whisper "Yes," ere voices were heard, and steps approached, and the hand was caught away.

CHAPTER VII.

GOLDEN DAYS.

"So glides the meteor through the sky,
And spreads along a gilded train;
But when its short-lived glories die,
Resolves to common air again."

So it went on.

Bellenden was not blameless, but he was less to blame than perhaps appears.

He was really fond of children, whether boys or girls; and had he possessed either sisters, or nieces, or daughters of his own, would have shone as an affectionate re-

lation. There was a simplicity in his disposition and tastes which made him the most delightful of companions to the very young; they never bored him; in their sports and pastimes he was as deeply, truly, and seriously interested as themselves; he could go a-nesting or a-nutting with the enthusiasm of a lad; he would spend whole mornings in constructing a bridge, or damming a stream, or making a minnow-bed; he would be quite pettish if called away to attend to weightier matters.

Now Cecil Raymond cared for none of these things. Geraldine had long ceased to bring out for his inspection her drawers full of birds' eggs, her shells, and her seaweeds. She had heard his "Very pretty" so often, had instructed his ignorance so often, and had seen him yawn behind his hand such times innumerable when she had endeavored to interest him in her simple spoils and treasures, that she had lost all heart for showing them.

Indeed she had almost given up bringing them out for anybody till Bellenden came.

She had found that so many of her grandmother's visitors would look to *please her*, would admire when told to admire, and listen in order to seem complaisant, that she had learned to suppose no grown-up people really loved such pursuits for their own sakes, and that it was only because she was still young that she clung to them.

But Bellenden had dispersed that idea.

He had not only explored every corner of her cherished collections, and handled deliberately each separate acquisition, but he had displayed an amount of knowledge and interest that was at once novel and entrancing. More, he had informed her that he, too, was a collector. Not that he "had been"—she had known "had beens" before—several elderly gentlemen had been laboriously anxious to assure her of their having at some remote period of schoolboyhood themselves collected and ar-

ranged, but her new friend was her contemporary on this ground. He had, he said, his collection at home, and whenever he went home he looked it over, and when he had a chance he added to it. His collection was of eggs; and if he were at home at the nesting season he invariably got some new eggs. He did not approve of exchanging eggs with other people. He liked to have them all of his own finding. It was stupid to have other people's findings. Jerry had got some that he had not, but it was far better for each to keep their own. It made a variety. He was quite sober and serious over it, and promised his young friend that if she ever came to his home she should see his cabinet, when she could have one made on the same principles, if she approved of the design. With regard to the shells and seaweeds he was not so learned, for he had never lived upon the sea. But he picked up a smattering of knowledge fast, and then it was quite a treat to behold the pains he took to assist the little conchologist in her travels round about the shore.

There happened to be very low tides all the time he was at Inchmarew, and at such times, he was informed by Jerry, much could be done in the way of augmenting the shell collection. To the little girl's great joy, the fine shooting weather had proved to be of brief duration; and, during the unsettled off-and-on wet days that succeeded, Bellenden found no better occupation for himself than poking about among the long reaches of seaweed and briny pools in the bay, in search of any thing that might turn up.

The shore at that point was fruitful; and gorgeous sea-anemones, as well as many humbler beauties, besides shells and weeds innumerable, rewarded their pains; and day by day the two friends—the tall gray figure and the small white one, for Jerry's white frocks went on every morning now, and it was quite a business for

the laundry-maids to get them up quickly enough—would sally forth in the early hours ere the tide had begun to return, and have a long, delightful hour or two investigating and discovering. Later on there might be the moor or the burn. The afternoon would probably be claimed for one or other by Cecil; but he was nothing loth to have his guest amused and taken off his hands, in the interval between breakfast and luncheon.

He had not, as after a time he found out, much in common with Bellenden, who was at once too old and too young for him. Bellenden was either a complete man of the world or a boy—Cecil was a youth; and it was doubtful whether he ever would become the one or could have been the other.

At present he was all Oxford and Oxonians; and he had hitherto felt that his prattle concerning these was scarcely sufficiently strong meat for the swell life-guardsman, who was "up" in every thing of the day. Then, to his astonishment, it had appeared that the veriest milk for babes was quite palatable to this very fine gentleman, for whom he had been straining all his faculties to provide fare, and he had experienced a curious sense of mortification and reaction.

What was he to suppose? Why, that Bellenden was, after all, but a shallow fellow, who did very well on the surface, but of whom a reading, thinking Oxonian very speedily got to the end.

The longer that Bellenden stayed at Inchmarew the better indeed was Cecil pleased. Not a note went out to friend, tutor, or relation but what it contained some mention of the personage then on a visit to his grandmother, and the reports of the Inchmarew bags during that week were sent to more papers, far and wide, than they had ever been before. But, proud as he was of the honor thus conferred upon one and all, young Raymond

could not but rejoice that the burden of it should sit easily on his individual shoulders.

He had really none of the trouble of entertaining the guest. Jerry, as we have said, had the most of him, while Mrs. Campbell found the young man delightful company during the meals when all were together; and she had herself never been seen to greater advantage than when, all animation, she revived the scenes, friendships, and stories of her youth for his benefit. As the two talked, Jerry would stand by drinking it all in, and wondering why she had never cared to listen to anything of the kind before, and whether it would not be rather nice after all to know something of the great world, about which both her grandmother and Bellenden waxed eloquent.

One day the latter surprised her.

"Don't you ever do any lessons, Jerry?" inquired he, somewhat suddenly.

"Oh, yes, I do. But these are the holidays, you know. I have been having holidays ever since you came."

"So I supposed. But what do you do when you are not having holidays? I never hear you speak of lessons. Have you not a governess?"

"N—no." For a moment Jerry wished she could have said "Yes," felt as if it ought to have been "Yes," and that she ought to have been able to produce the inflexible, spectacled preceptress, who had ever been the bane of her imagination; but presently she plucked up spirit to vindicate her position. "I go every day for two hours to the manse," she said, "or else Mr. Mackenzie comes here for two hours. He comes here three times a week, and I go three times a week. Granny says I could not have a better master, and that it is extremely kind of him to spare the time. I have often

heard granny say how fortunate I am," she added; but a glance at her auditor's face impelled her to throw in, as it were, carelessly, "I shall have a governess some day," at the close.

"Oh, you will?" said he.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. Most girls do, you know," said Jerry, instructing him. "My aunts worry poor granny to death about it whenever they see her. Aunt Charlotte—that is Lady Raymond—especially. She thinks her girls are perfection, and they are with their governess all day long; and she does go on at poor granny about me," affirmed the little girl, shaking her head and knitting her dark brows to emphasize the statement.

"Are they, your cousins, much before you in everything?"

"In French and German," conceded Jerry, with contempt. "They jabber French to their maid, and German to their governess, and that is about all they know of anything. One girl I met at their house," she continued, "could speak four languages. They told me so. What do you think I said? I said: 'I don't believe she ever says a word worth hearing in any one of them.' And I don't. She was the very stupidest thing in the world, that girl."

"How had she learned the four languages?"

"By going about. Her parents had been obliged to live in different countries, and so they *had* to speak different languages; and her mother was a Russian, or something of that kind."

Bellenden laughed. "Something of that kind," he repeated to himself. It must be owned he found Jerry good company.

"Even my cousins' governess said it was no credit to *her*," proceeded she; "of course, if you *have* to do a

thing, you can do it. Now wouldn't you rather be a nice girl in one language than a stupid in half a dozen?"

"Very much rather."

"But I suppose you do care about them a little?" said she next. She was not altogether satisfied herself on the subject.

"I think it is a pity not to know something of—French, for instance," he confessed. "Because when you go abroad——"

"I never mean to go abroad."

"Never mean to go abroad? Never mean to see any of the great sights of the world? Never to travel?"

"Oh, to travel, of course. But that's not going abroad."

At length, however, Bellenden won his point. It was granny who had set him on, as may have been divined; and his preparatory ignorance of Geraldine's scholastic arrangements had been merely assumed. He had undertaken to bring her round on the governess project, as to which Mrs. Campbell had in vain striven with the refractory miss.

A couple of hours with Bellenden, a few arguments, and a few expressive looks did what the poor old lady could not by her own unaided efforts have effected in a lifetime. Yes, she would have a governess, a good English governess—against a French one the little girl still made a stand, and in his heart Bellenden agreed with her—but she would allow granny to look out for one, an English one, at once, and she would show Ethel and Alicia how soon she could catch up with them once she were set a-going.

The thing was done ere the two set foot within doors again, and even the successful strategist, knowing what he did, was astonished at the ease with which he had accomplished it. He had now been some time at the

castle, for the week had lengthened out into a fortnight, and having once broken through the plan of his autumn campaign, and finding himself less and less disposed to resist the hospitable pressure put upon him, there is no saying to how much further the extension might have proceeded, had not the post—that bearer of evil tidings—brought one day a hasty summons to him to return home as speedily as might be, his father—a hale and vigorous Sir John, who had scarcely ever known an ache or an ailment in his life—having all at once given way, and been taken seriously ill.

A telegram was handed in as he was in the act of reading the letter, to the effect that there was no improvement, and that the worst was apprehended.

It was seven o'clock ere either reached Bellenden's hands, he not having returned from the hill before; had he been in the house when the post came in he might and would have left for the south that evening, on the instant; but at seven o'clock, although he might have started and driven a dozen miles or so across the moor, he would have found himself stranded for the night at that point, and it would not in any way have assisted to expedite his journey that he had left Inchmarew. Bellenden was a fairly dutiful son, entertaining for his father that sort of respectful good-will usual among the better sort of young Englishmen, when no closer tie exists between parent and offspring than indulgence on the one hand and dependence on the other. He was struck, he was sorry, he was ready at once to do anything required of him, when the ill-tidings arrived; but since there was positively nothing to be done, for that night at least, save to telegraph his return on the morrow, he did not make himself miserable about remaining. He looked out his trains, consulted Cecil about the chances of catching the most important, made arrangements for

leaving by the first steamboat which touched at the Ferry Pier, and when all was done, went down to dinner, rather more grave than was his wont, but by no means inclined to inflict his troubles upon anyone else.

"He will hardly care to go fishing to-night, however," suggested Mrs. Campbell, aside; for a fishing party on the loch had been arranged, and on this account the young men had not changed their morning suits, while Jerry also was arrayed in a frock suitable for the occasion, permission for her to accompany them having been previously obtained.

She was now anxiously searching the faces all round. She had heard the bad news, and had listened with a sharp pang at her little heart, but it had been almost immediately afterward swallowed up in a still sharper after-pang. Would then the night's sea-fishing have to be abandoned also? Bellenden must go, but she had known he would have to go some day, any day; and so, although the suddenness of his departure was hard to bear, still it could be borne, if only—only she might have this one evening's pleasure first.

It was something to find that both her cousin and his guest were in morning costume. That, in itself, meant that the plan had not been utterly thrown aside. It might not have been taken into consideration, perhaps; but at least the fiat for the condemnation thereof had not gone forth. If only granny had not taken it for granted that the boat and fishermen would not be needed, and countermanded them! Granny was capable of doing this, for her ideas on the score of propriety, though fitful, were occasionally strong, and Cecil, too, was a stickler for the proprieties. Supposing—and then she caught the aside, and waited breathlessly for the result.

"He will hardly care to go fishing to-night."

"Oh, I don't know why he should not, grandmamma."

"But if his father should be dying?"

"All the same, he has to be here—among us. And we must talk, and we must do something; and, upon my word, when a poor fellow is in trouble, I should think he would rather be sitting quietly in a boat, not obliged to keep going, you know, and that sort of thing, than in a room. You would have to talk to him, and be cheerful if he stayed at home; whereas, if we all go out, he can be as silent as he pleases. And it is such a glorious fishing night too."

The last argument was unanswerable.

Even the former ones had their weight; and Mrs. Campbell owned that her grandson was in the right, when she perceived that their guest made no demur of any kind, and even rose from table with decided alacrity when an early adjournment was proposed.

CHAPTER VIII.

"GOOD-BY, DEAR CHILD—GOOD-BY."

"'Tis but silk that bindeth thee,
Snap the thread, and thou art free;
But 'tis otherwise with me."

It was a lovely, peaceful summer evening, and the last golden gleams of the sinking sun were lighting up, mountain and sea when the little party sallied forth from the woodlands surrounding the old castle, and found themselves upon the shore below.

The tide was on the turn, and only a short stretch of sea-weed, interspersed with rock-bound sea-pools, still

glowing with reflections of the heavens' expiring glories lay between them and the boat, which, with its two attendants, showed a dark object against the gorgeous background.

"My last night's fishing on Loch Marew," said Bellenden, looking round with a sigh, "my last night in this bewitching spot, and——" His eye fell upon the auditor at his side, and he said no more.

Perhaps something in her upturned gaze and parted lip warned him to pause. Perhaps he feared to pain. He could tell that the little heart was already full. It would be hardly fair to seek to excite further emotion.

But Jerry had heard enough.

She felt that he cared, knew that he had looked with a pensive eye, and heard that he had spoken in a tender tone—it needed nothing further.

She was willing now to hold her peace, rather glad than otherwise that nobody seemed disposed for laughter and jesting, and was conscious that the silence also suited the friend to please whom was at the moment all in all.

He was more thoughtful than she had ever before beheld him.

And, in truth, Bellenden had a great deal to think about. It was not only that at any moment he might be losing, or that already he might have lost, a parent; it was not only that he could picture to himself a mourning household, his mother, brothers, relations, servants, all gathered in waiting on a deathbed; it was not only that he had never before been himself summoned to attend one; but, as time passed, the young man may perhaps be pardoned if other suggestions and considerations involuntarily rose before him.

He was the eldest son, and his father's heir.

Up to the present hour it had never seemed in the least probable that he would succeed to the title and

estates, until Sir John, at a ripe old age, should have been gathered to his fathers—and Sir John was barely past the prime of life.

He had married early, and was now in his fifty-fifth year, to all intents and purposes little older than his thirty-year-old son, and neither one nor other had contemplated a change of dynasty for many a long day. All his life the father had been a healthy, hearty, and vigorous man. The son had looked upon him as quite as likely to live as himself, more likely, indeed, in some respects, since Sir John had led for some years past the simple, placid, routine-like life of a country gentleman, whereas Captain Bellenden moved about the world, and fell in with its hours, habits, and customs.

The two were excellent friends; dined with each other at their several clubs; voted on the same side at election; paid one another compliments; and even in private seldom or never quarrelled. They did not, to be sure, often meet—but that was nothing.

Bellenden was now not only unfeignedly sorry to hear of his parent's state, but exceedingly astonished to find himself on the brink of a new standpoint in life.

True, after a vague and general fashion, he had been wont to observe, as young men and eldest sons will, "I shall do this, or that," in reference to the property which might one day be his; but had he been a younger member of the family he would probably have merely substituted for "shall" the word "should," and have had quite as much intention of carrying the vague proposition into practical effect.

But now, and all in a moment as it were, he found himself likely to be placed in full possession of the power to carry out every idle humor or visionary plan.

His mother would, he knew, defer to him in every thing; his brothers, with whom he had always been

equally omnipotent, would have no say; no one, indeed, would have any say, as no one had had any say with the one now passing, or passed, from the earth. As Sir John had ruled, so would Sir Frederick, rule supreme; and who could have been altogether insensible to such a prospect? It said something for Bellenden that he had never hitherto given any serious consideration to it.

During his father's lifetime he had neither intruded, nor interfered; and it had indeed been a complaint in the neighborhood that he had been so little seen there.

No one would have guessed how delightful all at once appeared the old ancestral halls, the country life, rural pleasures, peace, power, and plenty in the eyes that had been wont to contemplate it all only from a distance.

He had not wished to care, and that was the secret.

Of a happy disposition, he had wisely been well content with his own lot—no hard one, certainly—and might have gone on being so; but, be it remembered, he was no longer in his first youth, and, be patient with him, kind readers, if the new prospect opened to his now matured vision did appear indescribably tempting.

And then again would steal in more solemn and affecting thoughts.

At that sunset hour who could tell what might be passing within the old familiar home of his childhood?

Were they already beginning to count the hours until he should arrive? Was all over in that darkened room? Should he find only the cold remains of one who had so lately glowed with life and health, well, strong, buoyant as himself?

He could almost see the scene awaiting him now. The long lines of veiled windows, the sombre domestics with their subdued, important faces, the reverent hush of every sound, and every eye turned upon himself in anxious

expectancy. To him all would turn. On him all would lean. He must be the head, the front, the centre of everything soon.

No wonder that, wrapt in contemplations of such a nature, he hung over the boat's side in profoundest silence, the monotonous thud of the oars in the row-locks, and the faint lapping of the parted waters against the prow falling dreamily upon his ear.

No one broke in upon his reverie.

He was alone with Geraldine, as it were; for Cecil, at the other end of the boat, was completely separated from them by the two mute figures who plied their oars between, and who at no time loquacious, even in their native dialect, were on such occasions absolutely silent, unless especially addressed.

"How beautiful it all is!" exclaimed Bellenden, rousing himself at length with another sigh. "How beautiful! I shall often think of this night."

Could he fail to do that? Whatever befel him, whatever the future might have in store for him, would not that calm, still August evening on the Highland loch, with its strange attendant circumstances, its novel thoughts and emotions, stand out in his memory to all time?

It seemed as if he had been months—almost years—where he now was. The place and its surroundings had grown so familiar to him, he had so fallen in with every thing, cast anchor, as it were, so firmly in the soil, that he could scarcely believe, it seemed well-nigh incredible, that, until within the past few short weeks, he had never even beheld it.

And then this dear little girl. How nice and affectionate she had been to him! How completely he had won her good-fellowship!

She would miss him, he was sure.

He must send her something, some remembrance, some really handsome, acceptable present, suitable both for her to receive and for him to give, as soon as he could get up to town and see about it. Of course he should have to go up to town before long. Indeed, immediately, most likely. There would be so much to be seen to, and done—and then his thoughts wandered off again far away from poor little Jerry, sitting wistfully sorrowful and sympathetic by his side, far, far away into all the intricacies and possibilities of his own future untinged by hers.

At last they reached the whiting bank, and a little more animation stirred the party.

The oars were drawn in, and laid lengthwise at the bottom of the boat. The hand-lines were taken up, and unrolled. Bait was produced.

The night was as good a one as need have been, and though better luck had occasionally been known, there was, on the present occasion, no call for complaint. Jerry, in particular, was fortunate, and the little girl's spirits would have risen under the inspiring influence, if it had produced a like effect upon her companion. But although Bellenden assisted both in taking the fish off the hooks and in baiting them again, and although he was always ready with his congratulatory, "Another, Jerry? You are lucky to-night," she felt that the spirit was absent, and that the passing scene had only a faint, inadequate hold on his attention. His very smile was grave.

But after a while, and that at a movement of her own, he looked round quickly. She had shivered as the air grew colder, and a slight breeze had sprung up.

"You are cold," said Bellenden, at once laying down his hand-line, "let me put this over your shoulder," and he drew a rough, warm, weather-beaten plaid around her.

"Don't you go and catch cold to-night, and then be ill after I am gone, little one."

"It won't matter if I do."

The words escaped under her breath, but they reached his ear nevertheless, and he could not but make some response.

"You think your chances of getting out on the moor and the loch will depart with me? Is that it? Is Cecil no good?"

"I shall not care to go with Cecil."

"You cared to go by yourself before I came."

She was silent. It seemed to her that she would not care even to go by herself any more.

But Bellenden's tone grew more and more soft and gentle. It moved him infinitely, in his present subdued and pensive frame, to think how much of her affections this open-hearted, innocent-minded child had given him in one short fortnight. It gratified his vanity, and something better than his vanity—his benevolence. He was glad to think he had made anyone the happier, particularly anyone so sweet, and natural, and lovable as Geraldine. He put his arm around her and drew her to his side.

"You must not forget me, Jerry," he said.

"No." She had stopped fishing to listen.

"I may come and see you again some day, may I not?"

"Oh, yes."

"And you are going to be a good girl, and learn a great deal, and have a great deal to tell me when I do come? And you will go on with our collections, and read up about them, and have them all in nice order?"

"Oh, yes."

"I shall tell your cousins about you if I come across them."

"Shall you come across them?"

"Very likely I may. If I meet Lord and Lady Raymond, I shall ask to see Ethel and Alicia, and tell them all about their little cousin in the north."

"Do you think they would care about me?"

"I shall make them care about you."

"You won't say that I am very—very——"

"Very what?"

"You know what. You know how you found me that first fishing day. But, indeed, I am not often as bad as that, and I am never going to be as bad again. I have promised granny that I shall not. Aunt Charlotte, and Ethel, and Alicia would have thought it *dreadful.* I don't want them to think me dreadful."

"I promise that they shan't."

"Well, they won't if you stand up for me," and Jerry smiled confidingly round.

"Because I am grown up, I suppose."

"Oh, yes; and a man, and all that. They would think a great deal of what you say; and if you say that I am——" Here she stopped.

"Go on. That you are——"

"No; I am silly."

"Not silly at all. I want to hear. Go on, there's a good child. You are quite safe with me," and his arm pressed her a little closer.

"I was only going to say that if you would say I was rather nice—that is, if you *could* say it," said poor Jerry, humbly, "they would tell Aunt Charlotte, and she would perhaps believe it, and that would please granny. You see, Aunt Charlotte does not like me very much now, and that vexes dear granny, who loves me so dreadfully, and I thought—I thought it might just—no one else could do any good," she concluded. There was something so truthful and confiding in the limpid child-

ish eyes, and so artless in the childish confession, that Bellenden could not smile at it.

"I will certainly do what I can," he said, "and—and you were quite right to tell me all about it, Jerry dear. Now, you see, I know what I am about. And if a chance offers, why, of course, I shall embrace it at once." And to himself he added, "Is there any hope that she will always remain like this? Will she, can she be expected to be, always as true and honest? Or will she be like all the rest in a few short years?" and even the man of the world sighed. For he little knew, he little dreamed, that even then he had not seen to the depths of the heart he called a child's.

Just before the boat touched the shore he stooped over Jerry for a moment.

"Farewell to Loch Marew," he said. "Farewell to all the kind hearts here. Farewell, Geraldine. Good-by, dear child—say 'good-by' here, for I shall be up and away long before you are awake in the morning. I am to breakfast in my own room, so you must not get up as on the shooting days. So—say 'good-by,' then, while we may," and on her cold, rosy cheek she suddenly felt his warm breath, and then the pressure of his lips in a kiss.

Her heart seemed to stand still—the pulses in her throat to choke her.

Cecil, rising at the other end of the boat, seemed like a shadow in a dream, his voice calling to her an echo from some far away distant spot.

Mechanically she arose to obey the summons, touched the different hands held out to guide her, sprang ashore and stumbled along over the dark, wet weeds, blind and deaf to all outer sights and sounds.

The other two were behind, having stayed to help up the boat; but she waited for no one. And she never

spoke to Bellenden again, nor turned her head to look for him, but hurried forward along through the dim mazes of the woodland path, and in through the great porch, and up the broad stairs, straight to her own chamber, to be seen of no one any more at all that night.

For she was not required to come down again. There was to be no supper, only what the gentlemen chose to send for, while a tray was despatched to herself; and so the farewell on the water was really what it was given out to be, the parting between the two for many and many a day.

It had not been exactly so intended by Bellenden.

The kiss had been given on the impulse of the moment, and there had been no intention of producing such an effect as he could perceive had been wrought thereby.

"Is she angry, I wonder?" he had thought, half amazed and half chagrined; but, after all, such a thing was hardly likely. It had really been nothing to make anyone angry; it had been nothing to think twice about.

A dear little girl. A sudden parting. A tender good-by. Everything provocative and excusable. Jerry could not have thought any harm. After all, what is a kiss at fifteen?

Within twenty-four hours that kiss was, in the giver's memory, as though it had never been.

During his rapid journey south, and while he had perforce many long hours for meditation as the swiftness of express trains bore him on from one far distant stopping place to another, Bellenden did, indeed—having no companion to talk to and nothing to divert his attention—bestow a considerable share of his ruminations upon his sojourn in the old Highland castle. It was a relief to turn to it as a memory when almost spent with conjectures and cogitations in the only other direction

which at such a time could command his attention; and the repose of its monotonous life, and the charm of its intercourse, at once simple and refined, soothed and hushed his spirit when disposed to be chafed and impatient by uncertainty and anxiety as to what now awaited him.

But once arrived within the landmarks of his home, once assured that he was, as he had divined he would be, too late, the necessity for action, the cessation of mere passive endurance, the release from suspense, even the presence and voices of others, put an end at once and altogether to visions of the past. The future must now be every thing.

The new experience began at once, new and yet foreseen and anticipated. There was the hush, the solemnity, the mournfulness, the whispers, the death-like pause of expectancy. The old butler bowing his white head, the underlings subsiding with profoundest respect into the background, the shadows of the women flitting past in the dim distance—all wanting to look upon him unseen themselves; all desirous of seeing how he would bear himself, how comport himself—yet not daring to intrude. And then he had to meet his mother, his brothers, his uncles; to interview the steward and the coachman; to give his sanction to projected arrangements; to hear what had already been done; to write letters.

It was now twelve hours since the spirit had departed, and twelve hours at such a time seems long.

Lady Bellenden had so far recovered from the first shock and impression, that she had seen her children and consulted with her maid.

The young men had had a furtive stroll round the premises, and peeped by stealth into the paddocks and the kennels. The stablemen and boys had known to

keep out of the way, and affect not to see, as the poor young fellows wandered aimlessly about, feeling they knew not exactly what, wondering what they should do next, and how much would be considered lawful under the circumstances. One and all wearied for the arrival of the elder brother. To learn from him what would follow this sudden overturn of all the past, what the new *régime* was likely to prove, and how it would affect each one of them, was now their very natural desire. Frederick had always been a good fellow, and they hoped the best—hoped he would not change with his altered circumstances, and appear, as others have been known to do, a different man under different auspices. But who was to say?

Thus Frederick's arrival had been the thing most earnestly desired and anticipated both above and below stairs.

It was late ere it took place, but no one wished to retire to rest first.

For himself, he was too much confused and excited to feel fatigue. He had been travelling since five o'clock that morning, and he had not slept till long after midnight the night before; but he had not closed an eye all day. Even presently, even after all calls and claims on his attention had ceased on the part of the household, and one by one the domestics had departed for the night, and the doors had been locked, and silence within and without had settled down still more deeply than before upon the house of mourning, even then the traveller seemed unwilling to be again alone.

The brothers sat up with him. They talked together in quiet, subdued tones of the old days, the old boyish exploits, the quaint experiences, joyous or grievous, of the past. Childish nicknames were recalled; childish jests slipped out; little trifling tales arose once again to

the lip, that but for such an hour had been buried utterly.

The old home seemed dearer to one and all than it had been supposed to be.

Each had gone back to his own little room. Each went to it that night happier than on the previous one. Their father was indeed gone; all was over; they were very sorry; but—Frederick was all right, and their hearts were comforted.

And Frederick, himself? He also was now quieted down. He knew the ground whereon he stood, and might be said to be already almost at home upon it. From sheer exhaustion of mind and body, long and heavy slumber at length visited his wearied frame, and the sun was high in the heavens ere he was aroused from his pillow on the following morning.

But with consciousness awoke every new thought and reflection on the instant. A busy day—many busy days—lay before him. He must be up and doing—no more lassitude, no more uncertainty; a whole crowd of things to be looked after, and instructions to be given, and people to be seen awaited his appearance. All was solemn activity and decorous supervision. Inchmarew Castle was like the palest spectre on its own misty heath, if even the faintest recollection of it flitted across his memory.

And even that recollection was presently effaced.

New claims, new responsibilities, new hopes and fears, a new arena in life altogether had to be entered upon, and with surprising rapidity Sir Frederick Bellenden accommodated himself to the change.

By and by he gave up his commission in the army, and settled down at his country seat. Next came standing for his division of the county in Parliament, with the excitement of a contested election. Then the loss of the

election, and the consolation of sport, hunting in the winter especially. There was yachting at Cowes moreover, grouse and partridge and pheasant shooting as autumn came on again, and even a run to Scotland—and still never a thought of Geraldine.

He had not come across the Raymonds in the interim, and somehow he had omitted to look up young Raymond when in town, as he had meant to do. And he had never sent the little heiress her present—for he had forgotten about it till too late. And, altogether, the thought of Inchmarew was not quite so pleasant as it had been at first, after his conscience told him he had not behaved so handsomely as he might have done; and again he resolved to make up for it, should occasion offer—and again no occasion did offer; and so things went on for three full years, and then—but what happened then calls for a new stage, and a fresh rising of the curtain.

PART II.—GERALDINE.

"He's now resolved, and now afraid :
To minds disturbed, old views appear
In melancholy dreams arrayed,
And once indifferent, now are dear.
How shall I go, my fate to learn?
And O! how taught, shall I return?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE BUTTERFLY TAKES HER FIRST FLIGHT.

"In London I never knew what I'd be at.
Enraptured with this, and enchanted with that;
I'm wild with the sweets of variety's plan,
And life seems a blessing too happy for man."

All was bustle and joyful alacrity in a smart little house in Mayfair.

It was a bright, fresh spring morning, and though it was yet very early in May the mildness of the season had brought on leaf and blossom to such an extent that the parks, one and all, showed a blaze of rhododendron and azalea glories, and the pink almond, worn-out and faded, was shedding itself in showers on every side. London was full and busy, and a brilliant season was prognosticated.

Mrs. Campbell had been lucky in finding a little house to suit her, and she had now been in town for more than a fortnight, during which every day had been fully occupied in preparations for the important time now at hand. For Geraldine was eighteen, and was to make her appearance in the world.

As a preliminary, she was of course to make her curtsey, and kiss the hand of our most gracious Queen, and it is on the eventful morning of her so doing that we catch our next glimpse of the wild little witch of Inchmarew.

Any greater contrast than this to our first peep at her under the weather-stained yellow oilskin and sailor cap,

cannot well be imagined—and the outer difference does but shadow for her the still greater one within.

Three years had done its work, and done it well for Geraldine.

She was taller, slimmer, gentler, milder than of old—she was lovelier by far—she was no whit less truthful, honest, and frank.

The governess had been a great success; if a governess had been searched for the whole world through to suit the place, the pupil, and her surroundings, a better could not have been found than the quiet, earnest, sympathetic, and large-hearted woman who presently found for herself so warm a corner of the little girl's heart. Very quickly she had fathomed the depths and shallows of the soil to be worked, and had gauged its value. There had been no rude measures, no hasty reforms such as would have revolted Jerry's very soul, but, instead, there had been much kindly appreciation, a fair meed of praise where praise was due, and, above all, and it was this which had finally won the pupil's entire affections—a candid ignorance on many topics as to which Jerry herself was well qualified to instruct. To be asked to teach when she had only expected to learn! All the generosity and nobility of the child's nature had been aroused by the supplication, and no cause had Miss Corunna ever had to repent it.

Once begun under such auspices, the pursuit of knowledge had thriven apace.

Geraldine had actually exulted during the brief, dull, winter days, when there had been little to tempt her from her tasks, in the thought that the hours which she had been wont to wile away in unproductive trivialities or doleful complaints had been now hardly long enough for all she had to do. What with one thing and another the weeks had seemed to fly, for her eager spirit had set

no bounds to its desires, until even her delighted and almost equally enthusiastic preceptress had demurred. She had hardly known how to be moderate in the race.

And all the time, and underlying all, there had been a stimulus others little dreamed of, a spur, a secret incentive, the bare thought of which had been sufficient to incite anew had energy for a moment flagged or ardor abated.

That spell had been the thought of Bellenden.

He it was who had persuaded her to enter those new regions. It had been to please him that she had agreed to tread them, and to display to him her conquests and her triumphs was the prize she had coveted.

She had pictured his questioning her as to this and that. In her mind's eye she had beheld him scanning her books, her maps, her records of one sort and another. For his ear she had treasured up little histories of difficulties encountered and victories obtained, and she had fancied, poor thing, in her innocent heart, that when the happy day of meeting should come at last, she should find him as eager to hear as she to tell, and as appreciative and attentive as she could be discursive and dramatic.

He had not been expected before the autumn following his departure. He had written—a hasty line, but sufficient under the circumstances—during those first over-crowded days of mourning at his old home, and he had hinted at writing again, and had hoped to meet again some day, and had assured one and all that he could never feel grateful enough for all the kindness shown him at Inchmarew.

For some time after the note had been received, another had been expected; but on young Raymond's departure, Mrs. Campbell had felt that she had probably for the present heard the last of his pleasant friend

and guest, and that, considering all that had happened, it was hardly to be wondered at if it were so.

"I shall ask him here for the twelfth next year, if you approve," Cecil had observed; and, the suggestion having been received cordially, "the twelfth" had gradually come to be considered in his young cousin's mind as the point on which to fix hope and expectancy.

All through the long warm days of the following June and July, it had been a vision standing brightly out to view; and daily at last had the blue eyes scanned the contents of the post-bag, and marked every envelope which might be Cecil's, and might contain some words, something definite, some allusion or reference even to that great meeting—but in vain.

Cecil had come himself, and had neither written nor spoken once about Bellenden.

Perhaps Geraldine's grandmother had a quicker vision than the little maid gave her credit for; it could hardly have been sheer forgetfulness which caused her to let the whole first evening of her grandson's arrival pass without a question, considering what had once been agreed upon; she almost must have had some reason for waiting till after Jerry had gone to bed to make her inquiries; but she had done all this, and Cecil having been equally reticent, the little girl had thought Bellenden forgotten by every one but herself.

He had not been so. Young Raymond had been somewhat sore on the subject, to tell the truth, and had not cared to touch upon it. He, as well as his grandmother, had seen more than either chose to take notice of; and although at first Geraldine's open and manifest devotion had merely amused the one, and nettled the other, they had alike felt that it was well it should quietly pass off, more especially as it had not to any appearance been reciprocated. Bellenden had made a fuss about the little

heiress when there had been nothing else for him to do, and then he had gone off, and never given either her or her guardian another thought! No wonder each of the two elders had silently understood the other's suppression of his name.

The next morning, however, Cecil had casually let fall a piece of information.

"By the way, grandmamma," he had said, "you told me I might invite Bellenden to shoot here (Jerry's heart thumped up at the words) if he should be our way," continued the speaker, hunting for something in his pocket. "I did drop him a line, and I have his answer somewhere about me," pulling out two or three crumpled envelopes. "Ay, here it is," and then he had read it aloud and had afterward unconsciously, as it were, tossed the scrap over the table, and Jerry had read it for herself.

It had indeed been a delusion.

A few bold sentences—a reference to "his pleasant remembrance of Inchmarew and his charming visit there—his best regards to Mrs. Campbell and his little friend, Geraldine." And that was all. His "little friend, Geraldine!"

How her heart had swelled at the words! She had then only been his "little friend, Geraldine," while he—oh! the moonlit nights on which she had lain awake, sleepless and dreamless, thinking about him! Oh, the days wherein she had watched and waited, hearkening, as it were, for the faintest echoes of his approaching footfall, the furthest away whisper of his coming!

Scarcely, if ever, had a single sun risen and set without there having been in the interim some association with him in her thoughts, her efforts, or her wishes.

And he had not even come this once! And he had not even cared to pretend that he had meant to come! For Bellenden had written hastily and had let the sim-

ple truth appear. Inchmarew had never been in his programme, and he had made other arrangements. There had been no temptation to reconsider these, no inducement sufficiently strong, no prospect sufficiently seductive; and, accordingly, he had let them stand, and had not, when writing, taken the pains to put any other face upon the matter.

All had been clearly conveyed, and the very bitterness of the conviction that it had been so had kept the child-woman from betraying herself.

No note in her voice, no tear in her eye, nothing but a deep flush upon her cheek had been visible to others. She had endured her wound in silence, and had felt it throb and sting without a moan.

But for a time all the sunlight had died out of her day-dreams, and what had before been full of ever-deepening interest, those pursuits and occupations which had been growing ever more engrossing as the hour had seemed to draw near when the harvest was to be reaped, all of these had become straightway almost loathsome.

She had not been ill. She had been too hardy and too healthy for that. But she had drooped and flagged, and at length fond eyes had seen, and there had been change of air and scene, and the young girl had been spirited about from place to place until the results of such delightful medicine had been all that might have been expected.

Miss Corunna had been a princess of travelling companions, and the kindest and most judicious of nurses. Jerry had not only been shown this and that, and allowed to follow the bent of her own ardent spirit in seeing the things she really cared for, and doing what she really wished, but another sort of machinery had also been set agoing. She had tasted something of the pleasures of being rich, had been set on to buy numbers of nice new

things, new adornments for her own modest little chamber, a new carpet and writing-table for the school-room, books, drawing materials, music. Miss Corunna had superintended the purchase of a vast piece of gorgeous silk embroidery, wherewith to beguile the winter evenings; and altogether there had been a complete restoration to cheerfulness; and if the studies had not been resumed presently with quite so much vivacity as at the very first, it had been perhaps still more satisfactory to the preceptress to feel that now it had not been the mere novelty of the thing which had actuated the youthful disciple, but that there had sprung up a steady resolution to progress, not unmixed with a genuine taste for some branches of knowledge.

But Bellenden had never been quite forgotten—nor forgiven.

True, he had been from that time regarded in a different light, namely, as one who had slighted and deceived.

It had been no longer to please him that Geraldine had strained her utmost in mental toil. That had gone by. But his image had still fitfully haunted her, and she had not been able all at once to rid herself of it.

He had, she had told herself, deliberately promised that which he had never intended to perform.

In this, we may observe, Bellenden had been done injustice to; but Jerry could hardly be expected to understand as much. With all her brightness and gayety she was, as may be seen, of a very tenacious, downright, and steadfast nature, and with her, as with others of her kind, to say, however lightly, "I will" do this or that, implied a promise, and a promise to be sacredly kept. This is, perhaps, a little hard upon the facile.

Bellenden, when he had said "I will come again to Inchmarew," had certainly dreamed of nothing less than of imposing upon himself a solemn vow to do so. He

had equally certainly meant to come, all winds being favorable; but to have known that the words as spoken were sinking deep down into the breast of the listener at his side, to be registered there to the end of time, would, indeed, have taken his breath away.

He had now, in the eyes of his worshipper, disgraced himself and her who had believed in him.

He had broken his pledge, and broken it in the easy fashion of one to whom a pledge is nothing. Her idol had fallen with a crash into a thousand pieces.

She would think of him no more. She would never breathe his name to human ear. The little casket of treasures, each of which spoke of him and conjured his presence up? She would fling them to the winds. Even the most precious of all, the sketch of Inchmarew from the Kincraig heights—the pretty, dainty marvel of skill and beauty, set such infinite store by hitherto—it should go with the rest; and with ruthless, passionate fingers it had first been torn in many pieces.

And thus had ended the day-dream, with an awakening sharp and bitter enough.

But even that period had now gone by, and the peaceful routine of her improved and altered life, with all its new occupations and aspirations, had completed the cure which her own dawning womanly pride and resolution had begun.

The next summer she had only occasionally wondered at times whether anything would be heard of the recreant, or not? She had scarcely known whether or no she had even wished him to come. If she had wished it, it had been with a new object in view, namely, to make it clear that Sir Frederick Bellenden, changed as he might have himself proved to be, should find an equal, if not a still greater, change in the "little friend" from whom he had departed two years before. His "little

friend!" She had felt she could never forgive him that.

Had he come after those two years, he would have been met by a tall and graceful girl, whose stately greeting would have repelled all tardy advances toward renewed intimacy, and ignored all reminiscences. He should have been held at arms' length, treated with dignified courtesy, and his presence, except in that of others, quietly avoided.

All thrown away.

He had never come, and apparently Cecil had never asked him. By the next spring, he had ceased to be thought about at all.

For Geraldine was now, as we have said, on the brink of entering the great world, and although it would be doing her trusty guardian and grandmother injustice to let it be supposed that she contemplated launching a lovely girl upon a vortex of fashion and folly, or even upon an absorbingly giddy round of society pleasures, it must be borne in mind that the old lady had her own views about the matter, and was quite equal to carrying these out. She had no intention that her mountain heiress should go without the experience she deemed suitable and necessary, as well as the pleasures and pastimes enjoyable at her age. Happily, Geraldine was not by nature one whom the glitter and fume of fashionable life was likely to impress. Not only was she of too sincere and simple a disposition, but joined to granny's earlier example, she had had of later years the inestimable advantage of beholding, in the person of her beloved instructress, humble, inobtrusive piety acting upon the daily life, a lesson all involuntarily learned, and now her chiefest safeguard. Miss Corunna was now, as was not surprising, friend, counsellor, and indispensable companion—and accordingly, on the May-day with

which this chapter opens, who so busy as Miss Corunna, about the all-important affair, and the decking of the fair *débutante?*

Everyone, high and low, indeed, wanted to have a finger in the pie.

The nurse, who had cherished her nestling through every change of childhood and girlhood—granny's maid, who, intent on instructing and remembering, yet blundered sadly among new fashions and new follies—the old butler, who ran off like a boy to the nurseryman's, in terror lest the bouquets (the scarlet and cream one for the old lady, and the pure white for Geraldine) should not arrive before the hour appointed—the footman, who flung open the hall-door for monsieur the hairdresser to enter, ere that very fine personage could descend from his hansom, bag in hand—down to every housemaid and scullery-maid in the establishment, who, abandoning their work for the nonce, giggled over the top of the stairs as eleven o'clock approached.

And then at the very last moment, or what should have been the last moment, came the terrible discovery that Geraldine had no fan.

The fan of white plumes which should have matched those in her hair had been forgotten, and if Miss Corunna, all as she was, did not catch up a hat and spin around the corner like a whirlwind, returning with the same in less than no time, triumphant!

Then came such a displaying and spreading of trains and showing of accoutrements to the delighted household, who could never look, nor wonder, nor admire enough!

Granny said that they really should be late, and was almost inclined to be put out, when it was proved that she was so completely wrong that they were among the very earliest on the line of carriages. Granny was sure that in her day people had been wont to set off earlier,

and hoped that there was no falling-off in the attendance on Her Majesty's drawing-rooms; she would have been sorry, very sorry to have witnessed any diminution of their ancient splendor, and so on.

The dear old lady was soon consoled.

That there was no falling-off, and no curtailment, was obvious within a very short period, and she could then sit proudly up, and gaze upon the fair young face opposite with little thrills of fond emotion and anticipation, such as from time to time brought the quiet tear into either eye.

Granny was looking beautiful herself.

Her train of black satin, lined with some old, old brocade, rich and rustling, such as the little Court dressmaker had seldom seen or handled before, and which made her little eyes twinkle now, was such as suited her stately, queen-like presence; and although our gracious Queen does forbid high necks and long sleeves on these occasions, granny had contrived so to be-frill and be-ruffle herself that the poor dear old wrinkles were quite invisible beneath the soft folds, and were, indeed, as completely out of sight as though they had never been.

All her ancient diamonds—and some of Geraldine's too, for Jerry would wear none of them—looked brave in granny's silvery hair.

Jerry had contented herself with a single row of milky pearls round her white throat, than, indeed, nothing could have looked more soft and tender, so that even granny had not the heart nor conscience to press the diamonds back upon her, even while she had hardly felt it fair to shine herself in borrowed splendor.

But to be sure Geraldine shone unaided. She looked such a fresh, bright, radiant young thing in her simple white, with no adornments save the string of pearls, that, in the partial eyes so proudly bent upon her, it seemed

there would not, could not be a fairer rosebud blown that day.

Granny did not see many old friends; indeed, she only recognized here and there a face among the walkers and riders who now began to lounge along on either side the line, peeping in at the carriage windows, and making a halt now and again when hailed by their occupants.

Cecil Raymond had promised to look up his grandmother and cousin, and cheer and chat with them during this weary waiting time—but they saw nothing of him, though Geraldine kept a look-out with an eagerness at which she was herself surprised.

She had seen Cecil only the evening before, and he was coming to Mount Street after their return from the palace, so why should she care about meeting him again in the interval?

She did not know that she was experiencing, even in the midst of her splendor, a touch of that forlornness which only those can understand who, having been brought up in a confined and limited sphere, where every object has been from childhood familiar, are suddenly transported into a vast, seething, restless mass of human beings.

The past fortnight had almost made Geraldine imagine that she had outlived the feeling. The first shock had been got over; she had been up and down Bond Street and Regent Street, and had fancied herself at home in sundry resorts of fashion; but this pageant, so completely and entirely unlike anything she had ever before been a witness of, threw her back again.

Such endless numbers of fine folks, fine equipages, fine everything! Such wonderfully beautiful young faces; such proud old patrician ones; such lovely children!

Somehow or other, as she gazed, another face and figure, one she had known once, came back upon her so

vividly that she almost started now and again, so sure was she that the head or the profile of which she had caught a glimpse among the crowd must have been that of Bellenden. This happened more than once. It was, it could be but most foolish of fancies, and she was annoyed with herself that what must perforce only be the cold ashes of an old association should have had the power to stir the blood in her little finger; but she could not help it. She thought she would have liked to see him, and would have liked him to see her—and that was all.

As for Cecil, he was watched for more eagerly than he had ever been before, and even granny was annoyed by the inattention—since it would have been pleasant to have had their man to talk to as other people had. The carriage in front and the carriage behind had each a little group surrounding its windows, and Cecil, who should have saved his grandmother from the ignominy of being altogether unsought and unattended, was nowhere to be seen. He had made a mistake, as was fully and satisfactorily explained afterward (when the explanation did no good to anyone), but, in the mean time, the ladies had nobody.

Once inside the palace gates, however, and rushing up the broad staircases, and through the great vacant rooms, granny forgot everything else in the exhilaration of discovering and pointing out to Geraldine their good fortune in being early enough to secure chairs in the very front row of the only room in which chairs at all were to be had.

It was quickly filled, and then granny bade her young charge note the crush, the heat, and the discomfort of those who, shut back by the inflexible barrier, now poured faster and faster into the great saloon behind, till it looked a mere surging mass of heads and plumes.

Furthermore, granny explained that the ante-chamber in front, at present empty, whose recesses she and Geraldine could view at their ease, although they in their turn were debarred from entering therein, would presently be full of the happy people who possessed the coveted *entrée*—the right of entrance by a special door, and of priority of presentation—and that, as these assembled, it would be an amusing little pantomime to watch them tripping hither and thither, greeting each other, and displaying their finery—"And looking at us, my dear, as they would at inferior beings," proceeded the old lady, nodding her head merrily. "They are not in reality any very great people at all—principally officials and their wives—although, of course, there are a few noteworthy folks among them, such as the ambassadors and foreign princes; but they think a great deal of themselves on these days. My aunt Catherine, your great-aunt, had the *entrée;* and I remember so well what a point she made of never ordering her carriage on Court days before two o'clock. A little piece of bravado, my dear. She liked the neighbors to see, that was all." So the old lady prattled on.

By and by she had another pleasure. As the assembled groups settled themselves down, and had time to look around and take note of their surroundings, one after another came up from behind, pleased to recognize an old friend or acquaintance in the handsome, stately form which sat so erect in front of all, and with whom the lovely girl at her side was so evidently associated.

Then it would be all joyful greetings, and renewal of old ties, and eager inquiries.

What had she been about all these years? Taking charge of her orphan grandchild.

What had brought her back into the world? Whereupon the orphan grandchild would be presented with an

air that unmistakably meant, "Here is excuse sufficient for everything."

Perhaps granny had never been happier in her life than during that hour. She was quick enough to note the effect in every instance, and to have, moreover, a shrewd suspicion as to the cause of the various differences in the reception of her intelligence.

If it chanced, for instance, that the recipient were the luckless chaperon of half a dozen plain and portionless damsels, could she forbear to look upon Geraldine, beautiful, wealthy, fortunate, without a momentary envy? If, again, a troublesome boy, son, nephew, or thriftless young cousin had to be provided for, would not the envy be exchanged for covetousness? And it was only if the stranger were above all such consideration, and freed from all such encumbering remembrances, that there would follow the impartial and dispassionate avowal, "She is a great beauty. Do let me congratulate you!" whereat the old lady would beam again.

The time of waiting did not seem to her long at all; while even Geraldine had so much to see and notice and mark for her own reflection afterward, that she was quite taken by surprise at last when the stir began within the ante-chamber; and ere many minutes had passed it had thinned so fast, that their own barrier was withdrawn, and she found herself being gently but irresistibly urged forward.

"Keep by me, love; keep by me," whispered her grandmother with superfluous caution, for the two could hardly have parted company an they would; and in the excitement of the moment Geraldine had no time to feel bashful or nervous ere she found herself moving on in single file close behind granny, and aware that some one else was equally close behind her.

Beneath an arched doorway in front, it seemed to her

that within every few seconds a halt was made, causing a series of jerks to the fair procession, and the first idea that occurred to her inexperienced mind was that at this point the great event of the day took place; but, drawing nearer, the notion was dispelled. No; the gorgeous peacock-like trains were only being spread beneath that doorway, and a sea of heads all at once became visible beyond, while a monotonous voice rose ever and again, as one and another passed in and was lost to view. But what was it, then, that attracted every eye, and turned every head, as each fair creature sailed along over the polished floor toward that goal beyond! Alack-a-day! it was but a mirror; and the merry-hearted little Jerry of old all at once sprang to life again within the bosom of the elegant *débutante*, and she had enough ado not to laugh outright at the cunning little trait of human nature.

The laugh, however, had to be postponed to a more convenient season, for now granny was making her grand, old-fashioned curtsey, and taking her full time over it, ere she was hurried along by the unsympathizing officials, who would scarce permit her to make a reverent exit in what she considered a seemly manner—and next it was Geraldine's own turn.

It was said that the Queen smiled upon her. Perhaps Her Gracious Majesty had heard something of the young girl's story and remembered it, for it is well known how conscientiously the presentation lists are scanned and inquired into in the highest quarter; but, at any rate, many others looked, and noticed, and whispered to one another that day. Jerry might very well have had her young head turned, had she given heed to it all.

She did not. She was full of the fun of the thing when she got home at five o'clock, very full of how this one had looked, and how that one had looked, and how she could

have wished for another view of her Sovereign, and had been so confused and anxious at the supreme moment that, indeed, she could scarcely say she had had a distinct view at all; but with all the sprightly chatter, there was no word that was not pleasant to hearken to—natural, lovable, innocent.

The Raymond girls, the Ethel and Alicia of old, were in the drawing-room, waiting, all impatience, to hear how Geraldine had fared, to see how she looked, and next to tell of their own presentation days, to compare experiences, or note alterations. They had not a word to say against their cousin afterward. She had been neither elated, nor self-important, nor self-conscious—she had been just her own old self; and even her Aunt Charlotte owned that Geraldine was wonderfully little spoiled, all things considered.

What Cecil had thought he kept to himself.

He had also been in waiting, full of explanations and apologies, which, as we have said, fell now somewhat flat.

It had been the new liveries which had upset his calculations. His grandmother had omitted to tell him either about them, or her smart new carriage, and never having seen the full-dress livery of the Campbells before, he had forgotten that it would be sure to be in use on the present occasion.

"But I heard you had been there all right," he concluded. "I met a man who had seen you. Your old friend Bellenden, Geraldine. Oddly enough, I stumbled across him to-day, though we had not met for ages."

"Indeed!" said his grandmother, somewhat coldly. "We did not see him, or any one we knew, while outside, did we, Geraldine?"

"He saw you, however," replied Cecil, intercepting his cousin's reply. "He was on horseback, and could

not get near enough to catch your eye; but he had a good look at you, and said he should have known Geraldine anywhere."

"She is a good deal changed, nevertheless," said Geraldine's grandmother, still reserved and stately, and the tone in which the remark was made conveyed this: "If any person now thinks to find in my granddaughter an unsophisticated, impulsive child, to be safely talked nonsense to and played with, that person is very much mistaken."

Meantime the subject of discourse had affected in the prettiest manner possible to hear nothing of it.

To Cecil's opening sentence she had, indeed, accorded the proper tribute of attention, since he had directly appealed to her; but presently she had found herself obliged to turn aside, and find a seat for her Aunt Charlotte, and answer her inquiries, and show her the lace upon her train and on her bodice, and neither Cecil nor his grandmother had supposed she had caught a word of their little colloquy.

Of course she had, and it had been music in her ears.

She now just cared enough about the memory of Bellenden, once so deeply, passionately beloved, to rejoice that he had witnessed her hour of triumph, and had not shared it.

She wanted no more of him.

He had seen her, and seen her, as she could not help knowing, at her radiant best, and had been compelled to behold only from afar, unable even to claim recognition.

What booted it to reason out the matter? She would not stop to bethink herself that his view of it was scarcely a plain and matter-of-fact one, that there had in reality been no possible reason why Bellenden should not have made his way to her side had he taken the pains to do so. No, no, no; it had been nothing of the kind.

No, it had been the omen of the future in store for both.

She should be seated aloft on her throne of youth and beauty, with all the world at her feet—and he, he who had despised and deserted her, should be the outcast who could not even draw near to bask in the sunlight of her presence.

It was a pretty little vista, was it not?

CHAPTER X.

GERALDINE BEGINS TO PAY BACK.

"In London how easy we visit, and meet,
Gay pleasure's the theme, and sweet smiles are our treat;
Our morning's a round of good-humored delight.
And we rattle, in comfort, to pleasure at night."

The presentation had been on a Thursday.

Cecil Raymond declined to lunch in Mount Street on the following Sunday, as he had done on the two previous ones, alleging an engagement; and it presently transpired that the engagement was to breakfast with Sir Frederick Bellenden at his club, after which he proposed bringing Bellenden to call on his grandmother and cousin.

From the speaker's manner it was evident that a few civil words from a man with whom it was creditable to be on good terms had undone all the past; and the way in which he referred to Bellenden and quoted Bellenden during the next five minutes, recalled the old time when no one had stood on a higher pinnacle in his good graces. The very air with which he made his further proposition showed that he felt secure of its being acceptable.

Now, poor granny did not altogether like this; and

for two reasons would fain that nothing of the kind had been suggested. She wished to have nothing further to do with the guest who she could not but feel had been ungrateful and neglectful, and she had old-fashioned views on the subject of Sunday afternoon calls.

Cecil was himself of course welcome; but she would have preferred his not beginning to bring friends with him.

As for Geraldine, the word "bringing" was enough for her. A man that required to be "brought!" A man, who, even after knowing that his former friends and hostesses were within a few streets of him, could not of himself step across the way as it were, but required to be "brought!"

An indignant sense of this was on the verge of escaping, when she, however, recollected herself; and recollected herself, as Cecil's face told her, only just in time.

Yes, her cousin was certainly on the watch—actually looking out to see whether any traces of the old flame remained. Foolish, absurd boy! Did he not know her better than that? Did he imagine that because he could be won over by the first soft sentence she was to be equally poor-spirited.

She burned with shame for him. How easily he had pardoned everything; how pleased he now looked to sit and chatter there about his friend, and his friend's club, and his Sunday breakfast. Granny was gently demurring to the Sunday breakfast, well knowing what it meant; and Cecil, ever ready to conciliate, was explaining and excusing, and, moreover, assuring the old lady that it was not his habit to accept such invitations, that he did so, in fact, very seldom indeed, but that he had not liked to refuse on the present occasion, in case it might have looked as if—she would understand—as if

some resentment were still harbored which should be alike beneath a Raymond and a Campbell.

"We must take the world as we find it," the young man was philosophically arguing; "we should simply make ourselves ridiculous if we appeared to have thought so much of a trifle. Bellenden is a careless fellow and after he had left us he had so much to do and to think of, that we passed out of his memory. But he meant no harm, and he was as friendly as possible to me to-day. You would not have me appear uncharitable as well as unsophisticated?" he wound up.

He could not have done better. "Uncharitable" won his grandmother—"unsophisticated," his cousin.

No; Mrs. Campbell would not, indeed, have him appear, nor have him be, uncharitable, not to say unchristian; and certainly, to harbor any sort of grudge against a friend, even though that friend had brought it upon himself, savored, she could not but own, of an unchristian temper; wherefore, if it had been on that account that he had met Sir Frederick Bellenden halfway, she could but commend her grandson, and endeavor to follow his example. Bellenden should be received in Mount Street. And the dear old creature actually felt ashamed of her own feelings, and told herself that old heads might sometimes take a lesson from young ones.

With Geraldine Cecil's wisdom had equally told. To be sure, she would not wish to seem "unsophisticated," for the world. To be sure, she had mistaken her cousin and misjudged him. He was not watching, he was warning her. He meant to convey a timely hint.

Well, she would take his hint, but she must take it in her own way—not his. He was quite right to intimate that she would do well not to let any sense of injury or wrong appear; but when it came to the practical part of

the proceeding, she thought she could do better than he. He might know for himself. It might be right enough for him to accept Bellenden's overtures, and be reciprocal and responsive; but he had not once—and the hot flush rose to her brow, and her teeth were set within her rosy lips at the thought which followed.

"Do bring him," cried she the next minute. "Do, granny, let Cecil bring Sir Frederick Bellenden here. I want to see him again. And, granny, if I am not at home when he comes on Sunday, you will entertain him, will you not? Say you will, there's a dear."

"If you are not at home? Where were you thinking of going, my love?" inquired granny in some surprise.

"To the children's service at Berkeley Chapel. You know that it is so near that I can easily go alone, even if Miss Corunna does not care to go with me. But you will not go, dear; so granny will be at home, Cecil, if you bring Captain Bellenden—there, now, I must remember, and so must granny, that he is 'Captain Bellenden' no longer. I cannot think how it is that we both forget, unless"—with a tinge of the old bitterness—"unless it may be that we have neither seen nor heard anything of him since he became 'Sir Frederick.'"

"Oh, shall you be out?" said Cecil, looking rather blank.

"I am so fond of a children's service. And your sisters took me to Berkeley Chapel the first Sunday we were here, and I liked it so much."

"But the service will be over by five o'clock, my dear," her grandmother reminded her; "I believe it is over by four. And you must come in to tea, so that if Cecil comes then——"

"Oh, I never meant to come before," said he.

"I may be back, perhaps," observed Geraldine carelessly. "I only meant to say that granny would be here

for certain. It would not signify, you know, if I went along to Grosvenor Square to tea——"

"To Grosvenor Square? To us?" said Cecil. "But —but—do they expect you? Of course they would be delighted; but, you see, my mother always goes to her own room to rest, and the girls are either in theirs or off somewhere or other. My mother does not have people in at five o'clock on Sundays as they do at most houses, so, though I know that of course they would always have *you*, still, you see, if nobody were in, you might have your walk for nothing."

"Should I? It is too hot to take walks for nothing, certainly," retorted Geraldine, with a tormenting smile.

"You will be in at five, then?" said he, perseveringly.

"No, sir, I did not say *that*. And I never bind myself by engagements, in case I feel a desire to break them. If I make an engagement I keep it—I am not like *some* people"—the allusion was not so veiled but that he caught it — "wherefore prudence suggesteth making none." And he felt that she did not mean him to entrap her.

He was, in consequence, somewhat surprised when the day and the hour arrived.

On thinking the matter over, Geraldine had neither attended the serviee at Berkeley Chapel nor gone to tea in Grosvenor Square. Instead, she had arrayed herself in a dress of the softest fabric and palest tint, pinned a rare bunch of lilies in her bosom, and seated herself by the balcony window of the little shady drawing-room.

Five o'clock had scarcely struck ere the door-bell rang, and the next moment the two gentlemen were being ushered in. One quick throb her pulses could not but give, a faint shade of emotion could not but be felt—but outwardly the fair girl who stood up to receive them was all gentle smiles and sweet composure, and the hand that

was laid for a moment in that of Bellenden was cool and quiet as his own.

This was he, and the meeting was over!

The thought so engrossed Geraldine during the first few minutes which succeeded that, although she conversed audibly and sensibly with her cousin, and knew and comprehended what he was talking about, she had to exert every effort to do so, and was aware that she durst not let her attention wander for an instant.

A glance had sufficed to show that Bellenden was as much altered as herself.

He was broader, stouter, redder than he had been. She thought he was hardly so handsome, nor so elegant in shape. It pleased her to note that he had a dash of gray on either temple.

But his voice—his laugh? She almost wished they too had changed; she knew them so well, remembered them so well.

He was talking and laughing as easily as of old, it seemed. Her grandmother, still intent on acting up to Cecil's instructions, was benign and gracious as ever; and neither in his first reception nor in aught that followed had he anything to complain of.

And yet Bellenden knew, within the limits of that brief half-hour, what he had and had not to expect. It was obvious that he was not to take up his former footing in the household; it was equally plain that there were to be no reminiscences, no reverting to things past; and it was markedly clear that Miss Campbell had done with "Jerry," or even with "Geraldine" forever, as regarded him.

"Quite the swagger young lady," quoth he to himself, half sadly, half amused; "tremendously fine and fashionable. I might have known it would be so. Those frank, simple children never last. One breath of the world

nips them in the blossoming. Why should I have expected her to be different from others?"

For he had expected it, had been struck with a sudden and strange sense of the beauty and innocence of that girlish face as he had gazed upon it, himself unseen, on the presentation day, and had felt thereafter a restless longing for another and a nearer view. He had looked up Cecil Raymond with that purpose—he had not dared to come alone.

Yet he had thought to carry it with a high hand all the same. It would certainly be best not to appear as if he had done anything to be ashamed of, and it would go far toward vindicating his behavior if he could appear unconscious of there having been anything about it to vindicate. With a bold front accordingly he sat and talked.

Ah! but he was ashamed for all that, and the truth seemed to glare at him out of two fiery eyes.

Not Geraldine's eyes, for they were never turned his way at all, though they beamed large and liquid as ever on Cecil, or her grandmother, on any object in the room rather than himself; not the old lady's, for they were mild, serene, benevolent, and regarded him with a calmness which he himself was far from feeling; not Cecil's; Cecil was perfectly happy, and perfectly conscious—secure of having done the right thing, and charmed that all had turned out so well.

No, the eyes were those of his own newly awakened and indignant conscience.

What a fool he had made of himself! Why could he not, by a little ordinary attention, have done away with all this awkwardness and this tiresome embarrassment? A letter or two, Geraldine's present, an invitation from his mother, a little civility shown to the Raymonds—anyone of these would have enabled him now not only to feel quite comfortable, but would have given him the

pleasant right to be regarded in the light of one who was more than a mere acquaintance. He felt all at once a desire to be looked upon in this light; and the desire was scarcely there ere he was convinced it would never be realized.

He almost sighed as Cecil looked at him, and rose to go. He had interchanged a few gay words with Geraldine. She had shown him the flowers on her balcony, and had allowed, in answer to his inquiries, that she was charmed with all she had seen and done, and was looking forward with delight to what was next to follow. Both had confined themselves to London and to the present. The past had not been touched upon—Inchmarew never named.

Then young Raymond had drawn near, and had confidentially whispered something in his cousin's ear, at which the other had at once moved aside, haughty and vexed by the interruption, and moreover, with a keen and bitter recollection of having once said that Cecil would do well to obtain a start with the heiress.

That start had apparently been obtained.

"You are going to ride with her?" said Sir Frederick, as the two walked away. "Does she ride as well as ever?"

"Every bit; and we have got her such a horse."

"Ah! have I seen her out?" drawled Bellenden, as insinuating that he might have easily done so without remarking it.

"No; the horse only came up yesterday. You will see her out to-morrow."

All the world saw Geraldine out on the morrow.

As she rode slowly up and down the sun-lit Row, where the shine from the glittering heavens dancing upon leaf and stem, the gloss on the satin-like coats of the horses, the flutter of fan and parasol, lace and feather

among the brilliant many-tinted crowds, made the whole lustrous show a spectacle never to be afterward forgotten, the youthful heiress was herself one of its chiefest ornaments.

She had not been there before, for it had been a busy time of day with her, and she had not cared to go until she could take her place among the riders. Moreover, the previous weeks had not been beautified by the sudden blaze of sunshine and warmth which had now drawn forth every lingerer; so that, although there had been always the same thing in kind going on, it had not attained to its full perfection, and, hearing this, she had been content to wait.

But now what a scene of enchantment it was!

Sometimes cantering lightly over the soft, well-watered soil; sometimes sauntering past the railings, scanning the loungers on the side-path and beneath the shade; anon calling a halt at the corner where congregated the greatest numbers of all, and where she was informed that any who knew her, and knew she was to be there that day for the first time, would certainly be watching.

Cecil knew exactly where to go, what to do, and when to stand still.

He also knew by sight a great many people of whom, in her ignorance, she had barely heard, but whom she was apt enough to perceive she ought to know about and ought to understand about. Cecil evidently considered it important that she should; and he was very much in earnest, and took a great deal of pains in the matter. He was very little less of a young don than he had been in years past, but his wonted solemnity and profundity now took a different turn; and, as a rising young man, and an embryo politician, and a bachelor who had his own rooms, and had his name down for several good

clubs, and who could leave his card at a fair number of good houses, he was now ready to treat an acquirement of a certain amount of fashionable knowledge with all the gravity he had formerly bestowed upon his Oxonian life.

Accordingly he did not allow the present excellent opportunity for improving his cousin's mind to pass without exerting himself to take advantage of it; and presently expressed his satisfaction thus: "You have made a very good beginning, Geraldine. You have been lucky in your day. It is not every day that brings out so many of the right sort of people. I don't know when I have seen the place fuller," looking round complacently.

"Yes; I think it is delightful," exclaimed she, with animation. "It is delightful altogether. The sunlight and the shade, and the people and the horses. I am afraid I shall want to come here every day, though, Cecil."

"Well, of course; that is what people do. It is the correct thing to do that. To come only now and then is nonsense. You don't get seen, nor known, nor anything. You will soon begin to notice the most part of the riders who are here now—you will get to know them all by sight—they come regularly. It is quite the thing to do."

"How glad I am I have got my beautiful 'Sir Lancelot!'" patting his neck.

"Ay, he is quite the right horse to have. I dare say he has been very much admired. Your horse is scarcely less looked at than yourself in the Row."

"I should hope a great deal more," said Geraldine, laughing, "if 'Sir Lancelot' is only to be *less* looked at——" and then she stopped suddenly, and bent over her saddle, and was too busily arranging the bunch of flowerets in her buttonhole to proceed further.

"There is Bellenden over there," observed Cecil, all unconsciously; "shall we ride up to him? I dare say he is come to have a look at you."

"Not likely. And he is speaking to other people. I do not think he has seen us, so we need not trouble about him; and I am tired of the corner," quoth his companion, turning her horse's head round; "I should like to take another turn up and down, Cecil, if you do not mind. Let us go the whole length of the ride once more—just once more—before we go in to luncheon. Come," and she had set off ere he replied.

Nothing loth, Cecil followed.

He had been willing to speak to Bellenden, it was true, as he always was willing to be seen in company with a well-known presentable acquaintance—but he was more than pleased that Geraldine should not care about it, and should prefer "another turn up and down" with himself. They walked past Sir Frederick—tolerably close past, too—chatting gayly together, as though neither perceived him; and presently he could see their horses break into a canter, and the two figures disappear among the other riders.

He almost felt as if he had been insulted.

He had come there, as Cecil had said to see Geraldine.

He did not frequent the ride at that hour, for the scene had long ago palled upon him, and he had not his horses in town; but he had felt he should like to behold the little horsewoman of Inchmarew mounted once more. Why should he not?

She had been quite civil to him, and there was no possible reason why the two should not be good friends, or, at any rate, polite, sociable acquaintances in future.

It was not to be expected that she should be as demonstrative and open-hearted as when she was a child—

nay, it was hardly perhaps to be expected that she should think as highly of him even in her secret soul, as she had once cared not to hide that she had done; but he did not think he had himself altered, or, at least, so altered as that Geraldine should withdraw from him all ordinary liking.

She had certainly not been warm in her greeting the day before, but neither had she been frigid. Had she been one or other, he would have known what to make of it. But, as it was, he had (thanks to Cecil) been baffled; and the only solution of the problem which had at first occurred to him had been too disagreeable to have been long contemplated. But it now recurred with renewed force.

Her indifference could mean nothing else than that he was now powerless either to attract or repel; and whether that powerlessness were the result of any change in himself, or whether it proceeded from the ascendancy of a rival, it did not greatly signify. Either way it was bad enough.

That he had been seen and marked as he stood there in the bright May sunlight, he felt an instant conviction. He had himself been watching the pair for some little time previously, and had known the exact moment when each had almost simultaneously discovered him. When Geraldine had turned her horse's head, he had fancied her about to approach and renew his acquaintanceship, and had responded to the movement instantly—and then the two had walked slowly by, to all appearance taken up solely with each other!

It had been done deliberately; it must have been done of set purpose.

Had he shown—? But he had shown nothing. He did not think that any regret, or pique, or annoyance either with himself, or with them, had been visible the

previous afternoon, and, therefore, to pass him by so markedly must have been simply owing to the state of their own feelings. They had not cared to be intruded upon. They could not be troubled with the presence of an outsider.

He went away caring infinitely more about the whole than he had done when he came.

CHAPTER XI.

OUTSIDE A FISHMONGER'S WINDOW.

"In London, if folks ill-together are put,
A bore may be dropt, or a quiz may be cut,
We change without end; and if lazy, or ill,
All wants are at hand, and all wishes at will."

A few days after this, as Bellenden was strolling up Bond Street at an early hour—for he was an earlier man now than he had been wont to be—he saw coming toward him Geraldine and Miss Corunna on the same side of the pavement.

Who the latter might be he knew not; but he took off his hat, and half paused, as hoping that something more than a mere bow might be forthcoming from the light figure nearest to him.

Nothing was. The ladies passed on; and their appearance, or rather Geraldine's, having awakened afresh a train of thought becoming rapidly familiar to his breast, he stood still for a moment, absently gazing into a favorite shop window, without, on this occasion, seeing what it contained.

The shop was Grove's, well known to all lovers of angling, and it was never passed by Bellenden without a thorough survey of its cool, fresh, shining, tempting

contents. His footsteps ceased accordingly of themselves, and he was to all appearance completely engrossed, when, just as he was turning to proceed, Miss Campbell came tripping back, and alone.

She had dropped her companion at the Grosvenor Gallery, and was hurrying home in time to make ready for her ride. Bellenden could hardly have avoided the meeting had he wished to do so, and, as it was, he looked her full in the face, and the look was such that it could not be ignored. For there was something sad, affronted, almost piteous in it; and merciless and wholehearted as the young girl felt, she could not pass on without impropriety. It was the first time she had ever seen any man look at her like that.

On the Sunday Bellenden had been cheerful and sociable, and she had had no idea that he had not felt as brisk as he had looked; on the Monday she had not seen him at all, except in the distance. The eager movement forward had not indeed been lost upon her, and it had been delightful so coolly to frustrate it; but she had not supposed she had been able to cause anything beyond a faint twinge of mortification. How soul-satisfying it would be if it should now prove that she had really the capacity to do more!

"I was thinking of you just now," said he, looking down upon her. He could still look down upon her, tall as she had grown.

"Well, yes, I passed a minute ago," replied Geraldine, promptly. "I suppose you are studying this fishmonger's window? Everyone does, I think. I can never pass it by myself if I have a moment to spare"—"which I have not to-day," she was about to add, when he interrupted her.

"They remind me," he said, "of the whiting bank at Inchmarew."

"Which? The cod? Or the turbot? Or the lobsters?" cried Geraldine, merrily. "Surely you forget. We had none of these at Inchmarew. We have only common things there; but, of course, you have forgotten——"

"I have forgotten nothing."

"No, really? But I must run, or they will think *I* have forgotten what o'clock it is. I am to ride with my cousin; and I only just took a moment to see my old governess off on a picture hunt——"

"Was *that* your old governess?" said Bellenden, with still the same dangerously retrospective tone; "I—I should have looked at her with much greater interest had I known."

Whereat Geraldine—all credit to her—stared at him. Stared, as blankly and magnificently as though she had been born and bred in Belgravia. What on earth did he mean? the stare demanded. What was he thinking of? The man must have gone crazy.

"Good-by," she said the next moment, no further comment seeming to be needed. "Good-by," and away she stepped as light as a feather, looking prettier and friskier than ever in her dainty summer robe, with her little white sunshade bobbing overhead. As long as she was within sight, even though her back was toward him, she kept up the smile and a trace of the stare—but once within doors, and within her own room, the scene changed.

"You would, you hypocrite?" blazed forth the little vixen in sudden fury, "you would? And you think to make me now believe—you dare almost openly to insinuate that you have kept up your interest in—in me through all these years? These years during which you have never vouchsafed one of us a word or thought? You would like to begin it all over again, would you not?

You would get me alone, and whisper your soft pleasant things, and bring me gifts, and tell me to remember you by them, and draw me on to be so foolish and so hateful, that I cannot think of it now, *now*, without a cringe within myself. No, sir—not again. Not a second time, Sir Frederick Bellenden. I think I am a match for you now. What is more, you shall have to own it. I'll not avoid him; oh dear, no! I'll speak to him; dance with him; ride with him; almost—all but flirt with him, because granny would not like it. But if he ever tries again to be sentimental, or to make allusions and give hints, as he did just now, let him beware! He does not yet know little Jerry of Inchmarew."

The next thing was Jerry's first ball, and a famous ball she had of it.

Of course she could have had almost any partners she chose; for the fame of her had begun to be whispered, and the fashionable world was on the alert about the pretty heiress. Every one was asking his neighbor about her comings and goings, the genuineness of her charms, and the extent of her rent roll. Old and young alike thought that an introduction, even if it went no further, could do no harm. Lady Raymond, somewhat sourly, warned her mother of the necessity of being careful.

"People are so outrageous," she declared. "Really one is ashamed of one's fellows nowadays. Directly a girl with money appears upon the scene, the men swarm after her like a hive of bees. And a fine, unencumbered estate like Inchmarew is not in the market every day. Pray be particular as to whose acquaintance you permit."

It did just occur to Mrs. Campbell that her daughter might have seen some attraction for the bees save in the fine, unencumbered estate, and that she spoke with some acerbity when she described Geraldine as "a girl with money." It made her bridle up, and cut Charlotte some-

what short in her next remark, so that Lady Raymond feared afterward that she had not on the whole done quite so well as she had expected. She had meant to suggest that application as to the character and tenets held by the bees in question should be made by her mother to her son, and that Cecil alone should furnish the password to granny's good graces; but she was obliged to be satisfied with vaguely hinting at what she had intended putting into good round terms.

As for Cecil, himself, he was perfectly satisfied with the situation as it stood. In the double character of his grandmother's aide-de-camp, and Geraldine's instructor and companion, he went about with the ladies everywhere; and, on the occasion of the ball in question, had the honor of presenting his cousin with her bouquet, of facing her in the carriage, and of following her up the broad, red-carpeted steps into the festive halls.

The scene that here met her eyes was as new as all the rest had been to the little Highlander; but, true to herself, she now walked demurely through the banks of flower and shrub, and between the long lines of silvery lamps, looking neither to right nor to left lest Cecil should see aught amiss in her deportment. They were rather late, and dancing had begun.

Truth compels us to state that Geraldine was not a good dancer. All the running and climbing in the world will not teach the swing of the waltz without some pains being taken in its accomplishment; and, accordingly, although partners were rife, as we have said, they speedily discovered that the pretty heiress did not care to be long upon the floor, and that they might joyfully exchange the fatiguing exercise for a quiet stroll through the galleries, or, better still, a lounge under the awning of the balcony.

The latter was the most affected by the lady.

She had never done anything of the kind, and never seen anything of the kind before.

To be sitting or standing outside a London ball-room, amidst a crowd of ball-goers, in her brilliant ball-dress, on a warm, sweet-scented summer night, while the music went tinkling on within the vast saloons, and the dancers went circling round, and soft voices and laughter and light pattering feet filled the air on every side—it was like fairyland. She wondered if all the girls there were having as good a time as she.

Some of them looked at her rather hard, she thought; and so, for that matter, did the men. What was it that they saw?

With all her shrewdness and her inborn share of native self-importance, it did not occur to her that they were saying, "That is Miss Campbell. That is the great Scotch heiress," and that, thereupon, some fell a-musing, and some to picking her to pieces.

"My dear, you must positively stick a little closer to your grandmother, or to me," her Aunt Charlotte admonished her somewhat sharply at last. "Do as your cousins do. Ethel and Alicia are always coming backwards and forwards to us; they show they are under our charge by staying with us when they are not dancing."

"But I have been engaged for every dance."

"Where then have you been? You have not been in the ball-room."

"Outside. On the balcony——" began Geraldine, but could proceed no further.

"That does not do, my dear; it does—not—*do*," frowned her aunt, with a terrific whisper. "I thought you would have known better. Ethel and Alicia never go out on the balconies—never. I ought to have told you. Cecil ought to have told you."

"Why, I have just been there *with* Cecil," said Jerry, opening her eyes.

"Oh?" and Lady Raymond wished she had held her tongue. "Oh?—Oh?—Oh?—" she said, not knowing what else to say. "Well, of course, that—then!—makes a difference, to be sure," in an entirely altered tone, "to be sure that—ahem!—completely alters the case. It is only my anxiety that you should be the same as one of my own daughters, you know, Geraldine; and, no doubt, Cecil—Cecil, no doubt—" floundering on. "I dare say he took care as to whom you were with," she concluded, tamely.

"He introduced nearly all of them."

The next moment, however, brought a new introduction. "Geraldine, my love," said her grandmother's voice, "General Dacre wishes to know you. He was a friend of your poor father's," added she, lower, "he asked of himself to be presented;" and there stood a fine, soldierly-looking man, with crisp, gray hair, a thick, gray mustache, an aquiline nose, and a magnificent star of diamonds on his breast. Jerry had never felt prouder in her life.

A general with a star, at whom, for all her eighteen summers, she would only have ventured to gaze in humble admiration, had he not himself solicited a nearer acquaintance! She did indeed feel honored, as she took his arm, and moved about here and there, fancying all around must gaze at the pair with wonder and with envy.

But all too quickly came the disillusion.

This fine old warrior, whose notice had been felt to confer such distinction, and for whom she had been racking her brains to find topics not too frivolous and foolish, proved to be neither more nor less than a flighty old fool, anxious still to play his part among the dandies

of the day, and, in consequence, to be seen in attendance on any pretty girl who was the mode. That the reigning belle of the evening chanced to be the daughter of an old friend dead and gone, was a piece of luck not to be thrown away; but having made a stepping-stone of the fact, he had not had her ear many minutes ere he had thrown it aside. He had no notion of being longer looked upon in the light in which he had first presented himself, and, indeed, soon began to twaddle so foolishly and so flippantly, that the poor child, disgusted and ashamed, begged to be taken back to her chaperon, with a peremptoriness which admitted of no denial.

She was very short and reserved with her next partner, an elegant youth, who forthwith began the usual prattle about Ascot, Sandown, Hurlingham, and the like, to which she was now becoming accustomed. She would make quick work of him, Jerry thought; and with the tip of her pretty nose in the air, she all at once volunteered a piece of information which she had not hitherto been eager to impart.

"I know nothing of these places," she said, "I am just come up. My home is in the Highlands of Scotland."

Wonder of wonders, the effect was precisely contrary to that expected! The Highlands of Scotland? The Scottish Highlands were his Paradise, his Elysium. His whole face lighted up at the mere mention of their name. He was a Highlander himself, born and bred within the wilds of Lochaber. Of course he had known that Miss Campbell must be Scotch, probably from Argyleshire—with a smile—but he did not know, he did not think, he thought girls cared for London, and—and—but did she really care for the heather, and the sea, and the tartan, and the pipes? He was learning the pipes himself. He belonged to a Highland regiment,

and he was learning from his own pipe-major, the finest pipe-major in the service. The pipe-major had himself composed a "Quickstep" and a "Hornpipe," and was to play one or other of them, he was not sure which, at the Northern Meeting that autumn. Did Miss Campbell ever go to the Northern Meeting? No? Well, he could not say that he cared for it very much himself, it was getting so awfully big and cockneyfied. Still, he should go, as their pipe-major was to compete—and so on, and so on.

Never had he had a more appreciative listener. There was a true ring in the lad's school-boy enthusiasm which delighted and exhilarated Geraldine, and which came like a breath of fresh air after the false, artificial vapors which before had been supposed to be her proper atmosphere.

It was not, however, lost upon her that she had twice been misled within one short half-hour; so granny was not wrong in thinking experience was being gained, to which, we may here add, every succeeding evening brought its quota.

Bellenden was never at the balls. He was not a dancing man, and never had been; so that having persistently declined invitations hitherto, he could not now have turned round and accepted them, even had he wished—for none were sent him.

Neither did he so wish; he only disliked to hear young Raymond incessantly reverting to things that had happened the night before, or the night before that, whenever it happened—and it happened pretty often—that he was in company with the two cousins. He met them on most mornings in the Row, pretty often in the afternoons, too, at one place or another—(perhaps he noted where they were going)—and now and then in Mount Street. Not by themselves, of course; but,

what was grandmother, or ex-governess, or cousin? Only some one standing by for propriety's sake, someone, too, sure to be engrossed with the pictures, or the music, or the art treasures, or whatever it was that Geraldine had, by the way, gone to see, but which Bellenden very much doubted whether she ever did see. She never looked at them after he was there, at any rate. She did not look at him much, neither. Her eyes, her ears, her questions and answers were for Cecil—or so it seemed to Cecil's rival.

Still Bellenden waited. There were times—solitary moments—when he did not feel quite so sure about this as he might have been. He had sometimes been himself shot a glance, a flash of the eye, a furtive, swiftly-withdrawn, searching, home-thrusting look, which puzzled him.

CHAPTER XII.

"THEY ARE FULL OF PURPLE HELIOTROPE," HE ANSWERED.

"In the town, if it rain, it spoils not our hopes,
What harm though it pours for whole nights and whole days,
The eye has her choice, and the fancy her scope,
It spoils not our prospects, and stops not our ways."

Lady Raymond had given her ball, her one ball of the season, and now thought it time to have something else; and, it being the end of June, her ladyship presently fixed on a strawberry tea, with a recital, or lecture, or concert, or something of that nature, by way of food for the mind. Eventually a recital was decided on, the proper person for the same engaged, the ices, cakes, cream and strawberries ordered, and two or three hundred invitations sent out.

"I asked Bellenden, yesterday," announced her son one morning, as the family sat in conclave. "I say, mother, I think he has been rather neglected among us, for when I gave him the invitation, though I added that I did not think these sort of things were in his line, he laughed and said he was far too proud of being invited to refuse."

"I am sure I should have invited him if I had ever thought he would have cared to come," said she. "But he never called on us till this summer, and then I only took his doing so once to be because he had taken Ethel in to dinner at Fitzwilbraham's."

"Perhaps it was," said Cecil, significantly. "At all events," he added after a pause, "he is coming to the tea, and I should say we might ask him to dinner. Did you not say we had a place vacant, that some one had failed for Thursday?"

"He would never come on so short a notice, my dear."

"I don't know about that. Judging from to-day, I should say he would. He does not go out half so much as he used to do, and it might happen he was disengaged. At all events he could not object to being asked."

It ended in his carrying off the note in his pocket, and the same evening saw it accepted.

"I really don't know what has come over the fellow," Cecil privately informed his mother. "It was no fancy of mine, he really did look delighted when he read your note, and said he would come straight away, without referring to his engagements, or anything. I dare say he was engaged, but he is not the man to stick at that; he would find an excuse sharp enough if he wanted one; and he evidently meant to come to us. Do you think—can it be Ethel? How long did she have of him? And did it strike you that he was taken with her?"

"I certainly observed that he went up to her as soon as the gentlemen appeared after dinner," replied her ladyship, "but we had such a very short time in the drawing-room before we had to leave, and as Ethel said nothing, and we met so many people that same evening at Lady Marion's dance, I forgot all about Sir Frederick Bellenden. He is a remarkably fine-looking man, and, I am told, popular in the country. He is, I suppose, respectable?" and she looked inquiringly at her son, for the same idea was in both their minds, and up to her lights Lady Raymond was a good mother, and it was a *sine quâ non* with her that any applicant for the hand of either daughter must be "respectable."

"Oh, I should say particularly so," rejoined Cecil. "I have—ah—been making inquiries about him once or twice lately. He lives now almost entirely upon his own place, and has gone in for being the country gentleman, and all that. He seems quite different from what he used to be in several ways; hardly cares enough for appearances, you know, whereas he used to be such a very great swell. He still goes to the same tailor, but his boots yesterday were simply disgraceful. Made by some village shoemaker down at Bellenden, I should say."

"And very right if they were," said Lady Raymond, briskly. "A landed proprietor ought to encourage his own people. And he has stood for Parliament, too, I hear? Very right, very proper. I did not much care for him as Captain Bellenden, I own; he was too much the man of fashion for me, but since he has, as you say, turned his attention to a more sensible and rational mode of life, why, there is no reason—no reason"—and she drew herself up emphatically, "why he should not come to our house as often as ever he pleases."

Perhaps it was in accordance with this conclusion that

it was arranged to give Bellenden the agreeable Ethel as his partner at the Thursday dinner-party.

Ethel, if not strictly good-looking, was charming and accomplished enough, and had enough conversation, and presence, and deportment to make her quite sufficiently attractive, her mother felt, for any sensible man, especially for one who had now settled down on his own estates, and was not ashamed to be seen in Pall Mall in boots made by his own village shoemaker.

It is impossible to say to what the indescribable pleasure she experienced in the mental contemplation of those boots can be attributed. They seemed to her to be a landmark in the young baronet's life. In them she felt she had something tangible, indisputable, to point to, something to take hold of. They formed a distinct line of demarcation between the past and present in her eyes. A man who could wear stout village boots, roughly toed and broadly heeled, at his club and up and down St. James's and Piccadilly, must be, let who would gainsay it—a man of resolution and principle; a man, in short, worthy of herself, her family, and her daughter.

She prepared for her Thursday dinner-party with a sense of unwonted exhilaration.

Geraldine was to be present at it, but not Mrs. Campbell, who was to take her granddaughter on to a very grand reception at some foreign embassy, and who considered she would not be equal to more on one night. Granny had sometimes been a little overdone of late, and now husbanded her strength more jealously. She would, she said, call for Geraldine a little before eleven o'clock.

"And Cecil goes with them," said Lady Raymond, informing her husband. "He has secured an invitation for himself, although he could not get one for us. It is a pity the girls should not go, I must say, for it would have been such an excellent opportunity for them to

have talked French, and they so seldom have that opportunity; but, however, I am glad Cecil goes. Geraldine will not feel uncomfortable if she has him, even in a room full of foreigners. I dare say her Freneh is poor enough! What advantages can she have had in that out-of-the-way place, you know?"

"Humph! She seems to do uncommonly well without them," retorted the old peer, with a knowing look. It struck him that if his wife should now be lamenting the few opportunities his daughters had for airing a language the advantage of acquiring which had been so often dinned into his ears, he hardly saw the force of her arguments. Here was her niece, whom he understood—for he kept his ears open—to be running the gauntlet as one of the acknowledged beauties and fortunes of the season, being lamented over, moreover, for a deficiency which in all probability would never come to light. It was humorous, and Lord Raymond had more humor than any of his family. He saw the fun of the thing, and his eyes twinkled.

"So Jerry goes and they stay away," he said; "well, I don't suppose it will be much odds in the long run. You do not imagine the embassy is a desert island of France? If Jerry likes to sport her lingo, the mounseers no doubt will let her, and pay her every compliment about it under the sun; but I warrant she needs none of it to help her along."

"My dear Raymond, not to speak French looks so shockingly ignorant."

"Which is worst? Not to speak it, or to speak it badly?"

"Really, I hardly know. Both are bad."

"Well, I don't speak it at all, and you, my dear, speak it abominably—even I can perceive that;—so now which of us is the most 'shockingly ignorant,' eh? I dare say

little Geraldine could give us points equally," added my lord, who was a bit of a bear, and who now went off chuckling over the snub so happily administered.

His wife however turned to Cecil for consolation.

"I am very glad you are going to the foreign reception on Thursday," she said; "but I do wish, Cecil, you could have obtained an invitation for your sisters, also. You know what excellent linguists they are, and it is really a pity they should not have this opportunity for showing it. Sir Frederick Bellenden is a good French scholar, also, I remember hearing," added she, carelessly.

"He is not likely to be going, mother."

"Is he not? But no doubt he could go if he chose, and if we went, we could give him a seat in our carriage, and all go comfortably together. You will, of course, accompany my mother and Geraldine."

"I do not think he would care to go," responded Cecil, following her train of thought with acumen and sympathy. "But I will see what can be done. I will try to-day, and if I succeed, I will take care that Bellenden knows."

Then Lady Raymond went out and herself ordered her turbot and salmon, her whitebait, and larks, and truffles, and what not—for she was by no means too great a lady to know anything of such matters, and although she had her cook in town, the old housekeeper had been left behind to potter about the rooms, get the chimneys cleaned, and the carpets shaken, get the proper "spring cleaning," in short, generally accomplished—so that her ladyship, having held high conference with the lesser luminary, willingly proceeded to do her part—by no means an unpleasant one—of driving about on a lovely June morning, ordering in all that was grateful to the eye, and tempting to the palate, from fishmongers and poulterers and fruiterers.

Her mind was very busy, and her heart light that gladsome morning. She shook her head quite graciously at the persevering flower-girls, who would not be dissuaded from hovering round her carriage in hopes of a purchaser; she did not scold her coachman, who trundled her through some long, disagreeable, and narrow streets, whereas she could herself have shown him a quicker and better route; she praised the freshness of the fish and flowers, the size of the pigeons, and the plumpness of the poultry. Nothing came amiss to her.

If only she could be thus driving about, and stepping in and out of the shops, ordering her darling Ethel's trousseau!

Or, even dear Geraldine's—dear to her as a daughter already—as she was ready to assure Cecil at any moment when he should make known to her the crowning of his hopes and her own.

She would not more willingly exert herself for the one than for the other, for the daughter than for the niece.

And as for the young people themselves, everyone had but to see that Cecil and Geraldine were made for each other.

From his boyhood her son had made Inchmarew his second home; and how delightful it would be for her dear mother, now in the decline of life, to have him come and take up his abode there permanently, instead of having to undergo the anxiety and uncertainty of finding out who or what some other choice of Geraldine's might prove to be.

The risk was always so great when an heiress chose among her suitors. But such a man as Cecil! And such a favorite as he had always been of his grandmother's! Could anything be more perfect?

Strange to say, granny did not see it so.

She was fond of young Raymond, her only grandson,

regarding him in the light of a dear, kind, useful boy, whom she could talk to or not, just as she chose; who could be left by himself in the drawing-room to wait if she were not inclined to come down to him at any time; whom she could dictate to on some points, and take counsel with on others; who was, in short, unimpeachable in the capacity in which he at present stood—but she could not see him in any other. Least of all did she fancy his hanging his hat up permanently at Inchmarew, and her beautiful Geraldine, the pride of her heart, the queen of the day, going no further and faring no better than only her cousin, whom she might have had any moment of her life, and without budging an inch from her own doorstep.

Not but what the boy was well enough, and had he been anyone else—anyone but the lad she had seen grow up through all the stages of petticoats and nurserydom, and jackets and trousers and school-boydom—she might have put up with him; she would have liked her child to be "my lady"—yes; and she would not have minded some of the Campbell money passing into the Raymonds' hands; but—but—and the upshot was that she had hitherto declined to perceive any hints and innuendoes thrown out upon the subject.

Charlotte had thought her mother uncommonly dense at first, but had latterly wondered whether there had not been some cause for the slight deafness, or absence of mind, or the like with which the old lady had parried her attempts. She was not altogether sorry that Geraldine was to come alone—as she could do to her own aunt's house—on the Thursday.

Geraldine was to have Cecil's arm to the dinner-table, of course.

Cecil had not said a word when the paper with its list of names and appropriations had been submitted for his

approval; but she had understood, nevertheless, that all was right. And when it had further come to light that, by Lady Raymond's adjustment of her table, Geraldine would have on her other side a quiet old gentleman, whose attention would certainly be fixed upon his plate during the greater portion of the meal, Cecil had still cheerfully sanctioned everything.

But alas! for the "best laid schemes o' mice and men!"

Thursday came, and with it the appointed guests, save and except one—a lady.

A lady, and a somewhat important one, had been detained by illness; and poor Lady Raymond's face fell at least an inch as she strove not to appear too much disconcerted on her own account, and sufficiently anxious on that of her friend.

But it was hard work.

Here was Mr. Le Masserer, their county member, a man of considerable standing, their own neighbor and ally, yet not one too intimately known—here was he left in the lurch. A man with a temper and a dignity moreover, and worst of all, a man of whom Lord Raymond had a favor to ask.

It was out of the question that he should be unprovided for, whoever was. And she had not a minute to consider, and here was her husband signalling to her with raised eyebrows and portentous side-glances, and at any moment the dinner might be announced.

She murmured one word in his ear. He nodded. Another whisper. Another acquiescing nod. The next instant it was "Mr. Le Masserer, will you take my daughter Ethel in to dinner? We had hoped to have given you Lady Dawlish, but she has, unfortunately, failed us," with the necessary explanation.

So far, well; but, of course, Lady Dawlish's defection

could no more be permitted to bereave Sir Frederick Bellenden than Mr. Le Masserer. In a trice he had been coupled with Geraldine Campbell, and the unfortunate Cecil was seen to be the victim of the whole, the stranded solitary, the one who had a real and just cause for uttering maledictions on her ladyship's complaint, her absence, and the havoc she had wrought.

He could not even slip in on his cousin's other side.

All the table had been disarranged when at last he got down, and the places on either side of Bellenden and his partner had been filled, and as neither of them had heard a word as to the cause of disarray, or indeed had been aware of any disarray at all, all having been so quietly and elegantly managed, each was now silently wondering why they had been so brought together? Bellenden conjectured that his hostess must be a sensible woman who would not throw her daughter at anyone's head—Geraldine fancied it must be Cecil's doing.

He was always speaking to her of Bellenden, and the more she showed that the subject was distasteful, the more would it seem as if he were impelled to pursue it. That he should have desired his mother to deliver her over for the next two hours to the sole society and entertainment of a man for whom he was aware she had once experienced a feeling which she would fain now have buried in oblivion, was strange, and was hardly like Cecil, invariably attentive, courteous, and obliging; but if it had been done from a desire on the part of the extremely well-mannered young gentleman that she should vindicate her own claim to an equal share of good-breeding by her deportment on so trying an occasion, she was ready to carry out his wishes.

Bellenden was now, she told herself, less than nothing to her. She could meet him on the most perfectly easy and equal footing, and so far from being dazzled by his

perfections, and panting for his notice, she could now coolly rejoice in any opportunity which offered for disconcerting and perplexing her childish hero.

She had hardly hoped to have met with one at her aunt's. It had been a surprise to her when he had walked in, and a still greater one when he had offered her his arm. Oh, what that offer would once have meant!

Now, she had risen as self-possessed as any woman there, and had rippled forward across the room, and down the broad staircase, looking her prettiest, and smiling her gayest, and laughing within herself at the merry time she meant to have of it.

For she could see that he was grave and rather anxious. That meant that he would be sure to stumble on to dangerous ground presently; and then—and then she would lead him on, lead him gayly on, wily, witching, Will-o'-the-wisp that she was!—until she had got him fast into a quagmire, hopelessly fast and bound, when she would mock him to his face, and go off with a flash, leaving nothing but darkness behind.

She could bide her time, she would not hurry anybody.

Very demurely passed the first courses.

Miss Campbell was engaged with her soup, her fish, the pretty flowers on the table, the heat of the evening, the forthcoming reception at the foreign embassy, the concert she had been to in the afternoon.

Sir Frederick was quietly listening, and when necessary responding. So far he had not afforded any sport.

Nor did he by any means seek to engross her, as she had somehow fancied he would have done; on the contrary, he allowed long intervals to elapse without speaking at all, and when these were seized upon and made use of by Geraldine's garrulous neighbor on the other

side, she was provoked to find how indifferent he seemed to be toward taking up the reins again.

But one thing he neglected utterly; and this, of which he himself seemed absolutely unconscious, was taken notice of by her at once—he entirely omitted the necessary civilities toward the lady on his other hand. If addressed by her, he would rouse himself with a start, as though unaware of the presence of anyone so near, and when he had replied to her overture, he would drop the subject. At length she gave over taking notice of him, and Geraldine marked this also.

"I wonder, I very much wonder what he is thinking about?" quoth the little cat to herself at last.

Now perhaps Bellenden hardly knew himself.

Almost from the first moment, from his first sight of her on her presentation day he had been conscious of a new feeling about this lovely girl. There had been a burst of recollection, of tenderness, and of resolve.

He would renew the old friendship, make up for the past, and make his way in the future.

Then he had been thrown back on the very threshold of the pretty castle in the air, and had found himself shut out from entering at every point. Had she been one whit less beautiful, less charming, less tantalizing, he would have turned his back and been off, shrugging his shoulders; but Geraldine had played, and was still playing, her part too well. She was never quite cold enough to drive him from her. She never was gentler than when she was loveliest and most sought after. And, at times, now and again it had so happened that when with velvet hand she had dealt the little stab, the wound which had been meant to rankle and fester presently, and had seen him turn from her to bite his lip, and flush with mingled shame and vexation, her heart had so smote her for the light, cruel jest, that she had sought him out, and set to

work to undo what had been done, so humbly and wistfully that for the moment he had almost been happy enough to believe anything.

For he was now in love with Geraldine and knew it.

"It is because I know that she is as good and true as she is beautiful," he would sigh with regret all unavailing. "The woman whom I marry must be unspoiled by all the folly and heartlessness of this miserable world of fashion. What is it to a man that his wife knows how to dress, and dine, and parade herself from house to house, if she cares nothing for him, nor her home and children, and the things that good women love? Who wants a fashion plate for his daily companion and the mother of his little ones? I am sick of seeing girl after girl brought simpering out, and instructed how to dance, and chatter, and show off her points, and trot out her accomplishments. One is exactly like another. They all dote on country life, on gardening, and riding, and old women's cottages, and the next moment it slips out that they are in a dreadful fright lest papa should hurry them home before the season is quite over, and that they thought it so cruel of him to stop down in the shires so long at Easter and Whitsuntide. Not one but would exchange a country home with glee for Homburg, or Monte Carlo, or Brighton, or Scarborough. But I knew once a girl different to that," Bellenden would say, with animation, when with some intimate on whom such revilings had been vented, "I knew one child—she is a woman now—who, if she be not utterly changed, and I do not think she is so changed, would make any man, any man, any home happy. Pshaw! She is not for me. I should have but a poor chance, even if I meant to go in for one, I tell you. And I don't mean it. But the man who wins her——." and the speaker would here break off

abruptly, and his auditor would know what to think with tolerable accuracy.

He would tell the next person he met that Bellenden was hit at last, and that the poor fellow was very far gone, but would give no hint in what direction.

Had the speaker been present at Lady Raymond's Thursday dinner-party he would not have needed much of a hint.

Bellenden's silence, his abstraction, the quick glances he cast round from time to time if his fair partner looked toward him, or moved toward him, the lingering gaze which still hung upon her lips after she had ceased to speak—all meant the same thing. He was anxious, puzzled, curious, ill at ease; but he would not have been anywhere but where he was for the world.

The custom of having flat decorations for the dinner-table had not obtained at the time we write of, and in front of Geraldine and her partner large flowering plants formed an effectual screen from the eyes of those opposite.

"I like a lot of flowers," observed he once; "they are pretty, aren't they?"

"Very pretty. But," amended the beauty, afraid that her voluble friend on the other side was about to strike in before she could continue, and beginning to be a little desirous for one of those encounters of wits which had always a certain exhilarating effect upon her, especially when they left Bellenden looking blank and perturbed, "but for my own part I love the sweeter-scented flowers. These are very showy, very handsome; but I like——" Then she caught his eye and stopped.

He knew what she liked, and she knew that he was thinking he did so.

"My grandmother had had our window-boxes filled with large ox-eyed daisies before I knew anything about

it," proceeded Geraldine, going on at all hazards. "I did feel vexed when I first saw them. Oh no; it is not that I dislike daisies, only I wanted to have had mignonette, and—and——"

"Yes. I think I know what. I saw some charming window-gardening to-day. The best I have seen yet."

"Have you any boxes yourself?"

"At my rooms; oh, yes. Both of my rooms are full of the scent to-day. It was delicious just now. I know *you* would have liked it——" Then he, too, stopped, warned by her face.

"Indeed! May I ask what the scent was?" said Geraldine lightly. "I don't like every scent you know."

"I know."

"Then why should I have liked yours? What have you got in your boxes?"

"Am I to tell you —truly?" said he, in rather a low voice. "Perhaps I had no right to say that? I meant no harm——"

"Then—tell me," and her voice was almost an echo of his. She could not help it, she really could not help it, she told herself afterward.

"They are full of purple heliotrope," he answered, and turned his face away from her.

CHAPTER XIII.

LADY RAYMOND'S STRAWBERRY TEA.

"In town we've no use for the skies overhead,
For when the sun rises then we go to bed;
And as to that old-fashioned virgin, the moon,
She shines out of season like satin in June."

Cecil told his mother that she had managed very badly.

Poor boy, he really had some cause for complaint, for, as he did not fail to point out, in spite of the defection of Lady Dawlish, Bellenden could still have handed in his sister Ethel, while the deserted Mr. Le Masserer would have been equally if not still better pleased to have had the pretty heiress.

He did not add that in this case he would have been satisfied on his own account, laying all the stress on his friend's having been separated from his sister; but Lady Raymond understood him perfectly, nevertheless.

The poor woman had not a word to say for herself.

Of course, she, too, could have seen the better arrangement had one minute's time been given her to think about it; but how could she, or how could anyone have been expected to take in all the bearings of the case in the buzz of a full drawing-room, with the dinner imminent, and a husband signaling the one thing of importance, to which all besides must give way?

She had not enjoyed her own dinner, that she knew; and whether the turbot were fresh or stale, or the white-bait ill or well done, she had not cared an atom. She had only had eyes for two things, Cecil's unhappy and Ethel's discontented faces; and neither of them ought to have cast a stone at her, she was so truly penitent.

Now, Cecil would not have minded one half as much had it not been for a certain increase of spirits on Bellenden's part, visible after the meal. Bellenden, usually somewhat grave and *distrait* of late, had on the recent occasion been almost merry after the ladies had gone upstairs, and had shone forth as one of the talkers and entertainers of the room. Lord Raymond had told his wife afterward that Sir Frederick Bellenden had been a great success; Mr. Le Masserer had expressed his pleasure at meeting him; they must have him again. Where had he disappeared to when the gentlemen came up to the drawing-room?

He had disappeared, certainly, and—oh, he had gone to the foreign reception, had he? With Cecil?

"No; Cecil had gone with the Campbells—Bellenden by himself. But Lady Raymond did not know, and Cecil did not tell her, that the further shadow on the young man's brow after that evening was due to another cause besides that of the disarranged dinner-table, namely, to what had transpired during the small hours that followed.

Bellenden had appeared at the embassy soon after he and his grandmother and cousin had taken up position near the head of the grand staircase.

They had seen him coming; and he had felt a flash of conviction that by one at least of the party he had been expected. Geraldine had expressed no surprise, and on his own suggestion of an adjournment to one of the rooms—a suggestion which experience had taught him to believe would be acceptable under the circumstances—she had obstinately held her ground. It was too hot to go inside, she had alleged, and the crowd was too great, and she was sure granny did better where she was.

Geraldine's eyes meanwhile had been following Bellenden slowly making his way up the staircase, as though

impatient of his tardy progress, yet she had not spoken his name, nor told her grandmother of his proximity.

He had come straight to them directly it had been possible.

Still there had been nothing definite, nothing tangible, nothing that a rival could take hold of. Mrs. Campbell had received Sir Frederick courteously, but still with something of the stately dignity lately assumed in his presence, and Geraldine had merely honored him with a casual remark or two, such as might have been made to any one. There had been no chattering, no flirting, no picking up of threads dropped at the dinner-table. He would have told himself he was a fool for his uneasiness, had it not been for what took place presently.

Bellenden had been with them about a quarter of an hour, quietly assuming his place as one of the party in a manner he had never done before, when some acquaintances of the Raymonds had claimed Cecil's attention, and had for some minutes completely diverted it from his cousin. He had had to tell them how he came to be there, and how his "people" were not there, what they were about, where they were to be met, and where they were not to be met. He had had to put some questions on his own account. The new-comers were great folks whom he did not often chance to meet—people who seldom frequented fashionable resorts, but who would be noted wherever seen; the sort of acquaintances, in short, that young Raymond approved of, and with whom he would not for the world have cut short an interview.

For full five minutes he had been thus completely engrossed, and when he had looked round at the expiry of that period, neither Bellenden nor his cousin had been anywhere to be seen.

"They have only gone to hear the band," Mrs. Camp-

bell had said, placidly. "I told them that I should remain here, and that you would take care of me."

How long the strains of the band had been heard thereafter he could not have told. It had seemed ages, and must really have been during a considerable length of time, since directly Geraldine had reappeared it had been time to go.

Geraldine had seemed hurried and apologetic, and there had been a good deal said about the crowds, and the number of rooms, and the difficulty of making way through them; but all the talking had been done by her.

Bellenden had said nothing, but had stood by with a sort of smile on his face, which it had not cheered poor Cecil's heart to see.

He had, indeed, left all the excuses and explanations to his fair companion; but there had been that in his air which had said, as plainly as words could have done, that she was herself his excuse, and one sufficient for him or for any man. No wonder the son spoke sharply and sulkily to the parent who had, as it were, opened the way to so much; for that Bellenden had, by some means or other, now contrived to break down the barrier which had existed for so long between him and his quondam "little friend," and which had, up to the present, seemed so impregnable, was only too obvious.

Geraldine herself was bitterly indignant with herself during the summer morn which had set in ere the party quitted the festive halls, and which, gathering strength and glory, was blazing forth in its full tide of light and life as the weary girl sought in vain the slumber that had fled her pillow. She wondered what she had been thinking of, dreaming of. She had gone on so well until now. Never until this evening had she really faltered; scarcely ever had she been tempted to falter. She had, indeed, been aware of being ever more and more ready

to meet Bellenden, more and more constantly on the lookout for him—but what of that? He had had nothing from her but gay, mocking words, and sharp, two-edged jests. Only once or twice, only when she had been really too unkind, too barefaced, had she wheeled about and murmured the gentle after-word and cast the soft glance which had undone the rest. But to-night? To-night there had been nothing to undo. She had tried to be sarcastic, flippant, and unfeeling, and had failed, and had failed utterly. For the future she must beware.

And there was yet something further.

Bellenden had offered a box at the opera, and she had almost accepted it.

How could she now escape the consequences of such imprudence?

"The only thing will be to make granny refuse," she ruminated, tossing hither and thither on her fretful, feverish couch; "Granny must just say we have not an evening, or that the weather is too hot for theatres. I can show her that *I* do not care to go, and that will be enough to make her not care. Then I shall tell Sir Frederick what she says."

But when it came to telling Sir Frederick, the message somehow took another form. Granny was very much obliged, and would like immensely to go, and either Tuesday or Wednesday would suit her, as they had no engagements for those evenings.

Now, how was this? Let us hearken to the preceding dialogue, and judge to whom the apparent inconsistency is due.

Granny.—"Well, my dear, Sir Frederick is very kind, and I dare say we shall enjoy it."

Geraldine.—"It is the one opera that I have not seen, which I should really care to see."

Granny.—"I am told it is very good."

Geraldine.—"The Raymond girls say it is beautiful. Even Uncle Raymond has been to it."

Granny.—"Well, what night shall we fix?"

Geraldine.—"Why, if you really think of going——"

Granny.—"My dear, I am ready to go or not, as you decide. I thought you would certainly wish to go——"

Geraldine.—"Ye-es."

Granny.—"Do you *not* wish it? Of course, if you do not——"

Geraldine.—"Oh, but I—I—I—I do."

Granny, smiling.—"Then let us say Tuesday or Wednesday; for we ought to give him a choice of days, as he may not be able to get a box for the first."

So now we know as much about the matter, or very nearly as much, as Geraldine did herself. She had been equipped for her morning ride, whip and glove in hand, ere she had broached the subject, and there had been no time for discussion, not for mentioning the idea to Cecil, who was in waiting outside; more than this, an opportunity for conveying the decision to Bellenden unheard had to be watched for; and altogether, it almost seemed as if she were engaged in something contraband.

Bellenden was in the Row that morning; and it seemed to young Raymond that the confidence of the previous night had not deserted him. He was riding, moreover, which he had not once before done, so that he could now join company with the cousins if he chose—and he did choose. He put his horse alongside of theirs as a matter of course, and there was nothing to be said.

Presently Geraldine murmured something to him aside. She bent over her saddle to do so, affecting to steady a fidget on the part of her horse; but it could scarcely have had anything to do with "Sir Lancelot's" restlessness which brought the instantaneous look of

pleasure into her companion's face as she listened. What could it have been?

Bellenden looked, indeed, as he felt, greatly pleased, "We can take a fourth, you know," he observed, "Would one of your cousins like to come?"

"They have been already, all except Cecil——" here Geraldine stopped suddenly. What was she saying? She did not want Cecil asked, would have been sadly put out had he been so, and here she was, as it were hinting for an invitation for him. So it was taken, evidently.

"Shall I ask him?" said Bellenden, after a moment's pause.

No answer. He glanced at her, saw that he should have none, and was more contented than ever.

In truth, it had been the merest slip of the tongue on Geraldine's part, the bald statement of a fact, since she was already beginning to wish that the ring of the door-bell would not quite so frequently mean young Raymond's voice in the hall and step upon the stair, and that it was not to be taken so completely for granted that he was to be of the party whenever anything was arranged between her and Ethel and Alicia. They could not now go to a concert, nor a flower-show, nor a picture-gallery—they could scarcely walk, shop, or drive but what the brother would be met somewhere, even if he had not started with the rest at the outset. To be sure, if he had been now, as before, the merely attentive cousin and useful companion, his company might still have been welcome; but alack! a girl's unerring instinct had told her of late that the time for this had gone past.

Those constant visits, those uneasy looks, those close and frequent cross-examinations, fitful days of moody depression succeeded by bursts of light-heartedness and relief—all carried their own tale.

To ask him now to make a fourth as Bellenden's guest?

And for herself, to have to sit by Bellenden's side, conscious of those jealous, watchful eyes following every movement, those sharp ears on the catch for every word? She could not do it.

"Gently—gently, Sir Lancelot."

"Your horse is fidgeting for a canter, Miss Campbell."

And off they all went, and not another word was said about the opera; but the affair came off nevertheless.

The strawberry tea brought no improvement in matters, in so far as its givers were concerned.

Geraldine and her grandmother arrived late, and stayed downstairs eating ices and drinking coffee, until after the recital had begun, Mrs. Campbell considering that she might please herself and take any liberties she chose in her daughter's house; and, accordingly, when at length the two came upstairs, the large room was full to the brim, and not a chair to be had—upon seeing which, granny protested that she was glad it was so, for she preferred remaining in the cooler atmosphere of the landing outside, to any amount of fine recitation in a panting, breathless, over-crowded drawing-room.

Geraldine was of the same opinion; she had been surfeited with amusement of late, and the sounds from within excited no curiosity nor desire for more in her bosom.

Presently she drew her chaperon out upon the balcony, cool and tempting under its shady awning, and banked in with flowers; and Cecil who, as ill-luck would have it, had got wedged in at the very far end of the largest room, close by the platform upon which he had to introduce the reciter, and from whence subsequent escape had been impossible, could just perceive the wreath of rosebuds for which he had been looking, flit past in the far distance, hopelessly out of reach.

He must now perforce wait for the half-hour's interval ere anything could be done.

Never had speaker been so wearisome; never had performance seemed of such unending length!

Fans were fluttering, lace scarfs were being loosened, positions were being changed, yawns were being stifled, and it became evident that every one was hot, and tired, and longing to move, and bored to death, and the luckless author of the mischief knew that he had only himself to thank for the general *ennui*. He had selected a few long pieces, instead of a greater number of short ones, his idea being that once by Geraldine's side, he should not be required to move so often, and do his part as host. He had told his cousin to be early, and fancied she had promised to be so—in which case she, too, would have been up beside the little platform, and close to the large window where he had kept places vacant as long as he could. He had known she would like the air, and she might, he thought, have trusted him to see she had it.

He was now caught in his own trap.

The rosebuds vanished, whither he could not follow; and then, when the long looked-for interval did at last come, and starting from his seat, he had managed to struggle down the room a little way—being almost rude to one and another in his determination not to be detained, his mother—his mother again!—caught him, and all unwittingly frustrated every advance by presenting a lady of consequence, for whom his arm to the tea-room was required.

What a place of torment was that warm, whizzing, buzzing tea-room to him.

Geraldine was not there, as he had faintly hoped she might be; but innumerable other ladies were, and as all, or nearly all, of them were known to him, and as men were few, it followed that he had to wait on one and an-

other, procure tea for this fair, coffee for that, and carry cakes and butter-rolls and strawberries about, till his very soul sickened within him.

In the fulness of her satisfaction at the time when the tea-party had been in embryo, his mother had ordered with so liberal a hand that no fewer than three kinds of cool, bubbling, delicious cream—iced, clotted, and plain—were now offered with strawberries, to be accepted according to taste; and this choice, necessitating delay and compliment, was as the last straw on the camel's back to the unfortunate lover.

He thought he should never have done, never get upstairs again. As fast as he had satisfied some, others appeared; and his own dame was not to be persuaded in to impatience to reascend. No; she thanked him, but she was quite willing to wait a little while where she was. She had found some friends to talk to. Would he come for her presently?

Still no Geraldine. He had just made up his mind to rush upstairs and bring down his cousin, regardless of obstructions, when he was beckoned up by his rightful charge, and the chance passed, since, when he had deposited her above upon a sofa, the room had nearly filled again, and the second part of the programme was about to begin.

He would not be caught again, he vowed; and told himself he knew better than to be found inside the doorway; so flew back to the landing, and hovered there, peering this way and that, hanging over the banisters, scanning the hall below, making short discursive flights into the balcony, but never once taking a real look among the seated audience until the whole thing was over, and they, too, had risen.

And then, just as he was about to ask his mother and his sister whether the vision of the rosebud wreath had

been a delusion on his part, and Geraldine had never really been near the place at all, whom should he see but her fair self coming down from the far, far end of the room, from behind the platform indeed, where young madam had ensconced herself during all the latter part of the entertainment, having seen her cousin safely pass downstairs in the interval, and feeling secure that he would re-enter the great room on his return.

She had been disporting herself on the balcony, Bellenden with her, during the early portion of the afternoon, and we may be sure he had not left her afterward.

They had both enjoyed the recital, and had listened to it with a politeness born of contentment with their own situation and its surroundings. Granny had been with them, well enough pleased, too; granny was beginning to have her own ideas about Sir Frederick, and to think that his punishment had perhaps lasted sufficiently long; and so no one had helped poor Cecil, and his mother, who ought to have been his chief support, had done him an actual injury.

"A great success, Charlotte," quoth the old lady, blithely, to her daughter, as she now passed out; "a very pleasant party. If I had your rooms I should have liked to try something of the kind myself. But though our little house suits me admirably, it is not intended for entertaining. Another year, perhaps, we may be accommodated a little more commodiously."

"I had all three kinds of cream at once, Cecil," whispered Geraldine, as if he were sure to laugh and be delighted; "I had, indeed; and they were—or rather it was so good. And such strawberries! It was the strawberries that kept granny and me downstairs; we could not tear ourselves away from the strawberries, could we, granny!"

"They were delicious, certainly," assented granny.

"Charlotte, you must tell me your greengrocer, or did these come from your own garden?" for they were now in a family group, and could ask family questions.

"No, the strawberries had not come from their garden —there were none so fine in their garden; but these had been supplied by Lady Raymond's own particular market-woman—her market-woman, with whom she had dealt for years and years, and who had never disappointed her, and might be depended upon for anything she undertook. Before she had finished a gratified eulogy, Cecil saw Geraldine furtively twitching his grandmother's sleeve to go.

"You are in a great hurry," said he, moodily.

"Because we are late. I am not in a hurry to go, but in a hurry to be gone. Therein lies the difference. If we are not gone within a few minutes we shall have to scamper through all the evening afterward, and my poor dear does not like to scamper."

One or two things in the little speech had a strange flavor of Inchmarew in his ears as he listened. He had never, for one thing, heard granny called his cousin's "poor dear" before, in London. He had not seen her coaxed and hustled in that childish fashion of late. Geraldine herself, moreover, looked saucier, brisker, more mischievous and frolicsome than at any time since she had presented herself to the world as a grown young lady. He fancied she gave a little skip as she ran downstairs to the carriage. Where were they going that evening? he wondered. He had not known of anything being "on." Was it too late to ask?

He was still undecided when the carriage rolled away; and perhaps it was as well, for he might not have been invited to join the party, and, whether he had or not, he would have disapproved of it.

The ladies were going to pass an out-of-door evening in

the illuminated gardens, then growing to be the novelty most talked about, and a night for which had often been planned, but some other amusement had as invariably intervened. Geraldine had actually not been yet, in consequence; and now, on Bellenden's suggesting that he could procure for her and Mrs. Campbell admission to the lighting-tower if they would permit him to accompany them, who could have refused so good an offer? From the electric lighting-tower, he assured them, incomparably the best view of the scene was to be obtained; and the mass of people, the thousands of colored lights, and the silvery fountains, with their ever-changing hues and tints flying up into the dark sky overhead—the whole was a sight worth seeing. For his part, he liked the place, there was so much to be seen, and so many curious things to be investigated. He liked the aquarium—had they really never seen a large aquarium, and Geraldine so fond of sea-creatures? He must take her, at least, to look at the anemones. The anemones were finer than any he had seen anywhere.

And with the last topic had come a certain hesitation, and both had known of what the other was thinking.

But it had all ended well. He had been bidden to dine in Mount Street at an early hour, and the carriage had been ordered to be at the door for the three to go to the gardens at soon after eight o'clock. It was the remembrance of this early dinner which had set Geraldine to twitching her grandmother's sleeve at the Raymonds.

The night was balmy, but the great heat of the day had passed.

"How delightful is this driving about in open carriages in the evenings!" exclaimed Geraldine, bounding up the step. "We never drive after dinner in Scotland. I wonder why?"

"The evenings are seldom warm enough," replied Bel-

lenden, standing by the door, for granny had not yet come out. "You have not many evenings like this at Inchmarew."

"But they are warm enough for boating—or, at least, we go, whether it is warm or not," said she, laughing.

"Not clad like this," and he glanced at the soft white cambric donned for her aunt's party, and considered suitable to end the day in, the while in his mind's eye he beheld the roughest, warmest, thickest of serge frocks, over which even a double-folded plaid had not been unwelcome. "Don't you remember," he added, and as he spoke he looked her fully and boldly in the face, "don't you remember how cold it grew, and how you shivered and trembled that night?"

Granny came out ere he had an answer.

Granny was much pleased with her entertainment. The scene altogether was as novel to her as to Geraldine, for there had been nothing of the kind in her young days, and she looked, and wondered, and admired, and trotted hither and thither, and gave herself up so entirely to the enjoyment of the evening, that she, too, once more became the granny of Inchmarew, not the stately dame Bellenden had found in Mount Street.

After descending from the tower, the three proceeded to wander about, sometimes looking at this object, sometimes at that, occasionally listening to the musicians, now taking a seat, now walking to and fro—all was pleasant, and each one was pleased.

"But we must really go some time," cried the old lady at last. "We have been beguiled into staying much later than I had intended, and our poor coachman will have wondered what can possibly have happened to us. I had been growing a little fidgety before you came back just now——" from which it may be inferred that the chaperon had more than once been left for a few minutes

to rest herself, while the others had just stepped round the corner to see something absolutely imperative to be seen—"we must lose no time now," she said at last. "Geraldine, your shawl. It is growing quite cold. I have put on mine some time ago. Now," and she set off briskly, and either did not or would not notice that it was Bellenden who slowly drew the shawl round her charge, the while he bent his head to murmur something which told her that he was thinking of another darkened sky and deepening chill, when the self-same service had been turned into a close caress.

He parted from them at their carriage door, saying he would walk home.

He wished to be alone, and felt that Geraldine did also.

"She has won me, and I think I have won her," he told himself. "She is a noble creature, and I deserved, richly deserved, that I should be despised for my conduct toward her. But now we are reconciled—now I may say what I choose, make any allusions I choose. How quick, how apprehensive she is! How readily she guesses my meaning and interprets every sign! She *must* know all. She *must* understand me. I have been plain enough. I have said everything but the one thing, and that I shall not linger over now. And to think that that little girl I left behind on the Highland loch was to be my fate after all!"

Was he, or was he not, getting on a little too fast?

CHAPTER XIV.

CECIL AT THE REGATTA.

"In London the spirits are cheerful and light,
All places are gay and all faces are bright;
We've ever new joys, and revived by each whim,
Each day on a new tide of pleasure we swim."

Whereby had the wondrous change been wrought?

It had come about of itself; it had been the result of no effort, of no ingenuity, no ability.

Bellenden had simply borne his punishment in patience, and after the first, had neither resented, nor disdained it, and in this had lain his strength. What woman can long resist the meek endurance of her wrath?

And thereupon the old charm had begun to work. Perhaps neither quite knew when it had so begun—certainly Geraldine did not, and was fain to continue in ignorance; but after that evening in the gardens, nay, even after the other spent in the hot and crowded theatre, she could no longer conceal from herself that it was there.

She would find herself looking, listening, responding as of yore. Anon she would awake with a start, wild with herself and with him—all too late. What was to be done? The season was yet at its height.

"Henley is the next thing," said Lady Raymond. She was a person of more exact and circumscribed opinions than her mother, and she had not altogether approved of several amusements to which Geraldine had been taken; but Henley Regatta was the one festival of the year of which she was wont to partake with unqualified satisfaction. Her sister Maria, who, it will be remembered, was the other aunt occasionally referred to at

Inchmarew, had now issued her customary invitation to stop at The Lawn, go down the river in boats, lunch on the bank, and enjoy all the pleasures of the regatta with none of its toils. Maria had hoped that her mother and niece would be this year of the party also, and in her letter instructed Charlotte to concert with them as to preliminaries.

"You have got your invitation, I know," said her ladyship, coming in early one morning, "and I am so glad that Geraldine will have the treat. I consider Henley Regatta quite the prettiest of the summer sights."

Whereupon granny coughed and looked about her, but made no answer.

"You mean to go, of course?" demanded Lady Raymond, somewhat imperiously.

"I—we have not quite made up our minds, my dear."

The truth was that Cecil was the difficulty. Geraldine did not, it is true, put into words the burden which was daily pressing upon her in the shape of Cecil, saying to herself that her grandmother saw nothing, and that she would not be so selfish as to disturb her poor dear's serenity and peace of mind; but granny had in reality been carefully on the alert, watching at every turn for what might next befall, and ready to catch her cue in a moment of time, at any emergency. She also thought it best to say as little as need be, and only to do nothing and accept nothing without her granddaughter's sanction.

Cecil had gone with the two to Ascot, and to Hurlingham, and had spoilt both days; was he now to spoil Henley also?

Geraldine had announced her intention of going no more to either of the former resorts. Ascot, she said, had been very pretty, very bright, very gay, the horses themselves had been beautiful, and the racing delightful;

but she had not liked it as *a whole*—and there had been a quick shake of the little resolute head, and a setting of the stern young lip, which might, after all, have had no reference to her cousin. But, in regard to Hurlingham, he had certainly been the chief offence. There she had seen nothing but a harmless polo match, and had drunk tea on the lawn, and dined later on in the club-house, and certainly whatever evil had been present, it had not presented itself to her innocent eyes—so it was, it must have been Cecil's presence on that occasion which had caused the affair to find so little favor in her sight.

"It was altogether stale," she told Bellenden, afterward.

"Stale!" exclaimed he in surprise. "I did not know—I fancied you had never been there before."

"Neither I had. And," said Geraldine, impetuously, "I never wish to go there again."

"Your cousin must have been disappointed," observed he. "He meant to please you, I know." He had not himself been of the party, and knew very well why.

"It was *stupid!*" cried the spoilt child, "*stupid.* We felt so foolish, granny and I, and Cecil, sitting up there with no one to talk to and no reason why we might not as well have been at home. If Cecil had invited a number of nice people——"

"Myself, for instance."

Geraldine laughed.

"Do say it," continued he, only half in jest, "because, you see, I was so terribly anxious to go, and so greatly disappointed that I was not asked."

Now there was no chance of his being asked to Aunt Maria's Henley party, and that in itself might have taken the edge off somebody's pleasure; but if to that were to be added Cecil Raymond's uninterrupted companionship for two whole days, the outlook might be regarded as

black indeed. In consequence came granny's cough when her daughter's pressing tone seemed to compel an answer "Yea" or "Nay"—she read consternation on the brow of her fair barometer.

"You will go, of course," proceeded Lady Raymond, however, "I know you are disengaged, and Maria is counting upon you. She told me long ago that she had not worried you with invitations before, as she had reckoned on you for the regatta. We shall be a family party—so pleasant. The Lawn always looks its best at regatta time, and a few days in the country will do us all good."

"Geraldine and I—yes—I think we can go; but really we must talk it over together first," protested granny, doing as well as could have been expected of her. "You see you are our first intimation of the news, for though we had got the letter, I had really hardly looked at it," nervously turning the envelope backwards and forwards in her hand. "We will endeavor to go, but——"

"Oh, you must really make a push for it. All along it has been understood that Geraldine was to see Henley; and I can assure you both that, as a sight, it is in its way unique. My girls enjoy it of all things. The row down the river—for The Lawn is three miles above Henley—the crowds of boats, the music, the brightness, the gayety over all," cried Lady Raymond, with renewed animation, "and Maria really exerts herself to get the right people together; I have never met any but pleasant people there. The girls will tell you the same. She invited a considerable number to luncheon, in addition to those stopping in the house. I used to take Ethel and Alicia when they were still in the school-room—I felt so sure of their only meeting the right sort of people. That, and the Eton and Harrow match, were the only galas we permitted them, as young girls."

"Oh, you must come to the regatta," Ethel was saying aside to Geraldine. "It is really good fun, and we should all be so disappointed if you do not. I doubt if Aunt Maria would ever forgive it. Tell granny she must go."

Which Geraldine did with a sigh. She saw there was no help for it, since to have stood out would have been to raise a family commotion—of all things to be avoided at the present crisis; and now all that remained to be done was to try and struggle through as well and as bravely as she could.

"You are going to Henley?" said Bellenden, when he heard of it. "Yes, Henley might be very good fun if you are with the right sort of people," he added, unconsciously plagiarizing Lady Raymond in his choice of ideas. "Who are you to be with?"

When he heard of whom the party were to consist, and that it was to be confined to the Raymonds and the St. Georges, his face changed.

"I don't know Mrs. St. George," he said, "but I shall see you, I dare say, somehow. I shall go down for the day. It is a miserable way of doing it, but I have no other. I am too late to get a room anywhere now."

"You always go, then?"

"Never went before in my life."

She dared not risk another question.

For Geraldine, as we have already hinted, knew that she daily drew nearer and nearer the edge of a precipice.

So far, she had prevented the words being spoken which she had felt were trembling more than once upon the lips hard by, and had just managed to turn aside more than one moment instinct with opportunity, so that she had got as far as another week on, since the night in the gardens, without any advance having been made; but she

had learned more and more to distrust herself, and to watch the other one.

Was Bellenden but toying with her young heart a second time? She did not think so—but how was she to be sure? What if those meaning glances, those dulcet undertones, the pains he took to be near her, the gloom on his brow when parted from her, were all but the cunning of a master-hand playing against its delusive, magic music.

She had thought he had loved her once—not loved like this, of course—but still had granted her a place in his affections and memory which she had been proved never to have possessed; and as she had refused to doubt him then, how was she now to trust herself to judge him aright?

Well did she recollect the sudden blaze of childish fury which had risen within her breast when Cecil, gayly taunting, had whispered about knights who had loved and rode away, ere his own resentment had been awakened by the prediction having been verified. Cecil had been right, and she had been wrong—once. Who was to say which would be the truer prophet now?

Of one thing, however, Geraldine was clear; she very earnestly desired that Cecil Raymond should not be aware of how far Bellenden had already gone, how often the two had met, and to what extent they had advanced in intimacy. She never mentioned to her cousin Sir Frederick's name. She looked as unconscious as she could if he were casually referred to by others. And if she knew he were to be in any place at any hour on the watch for her and ready to join her, she would sooner have given up the meeting altogether than have had on her other side the playmate of her youth.

With a heavy heart she now prepared for the two days' visit at Aunt Maria's. She knew how it would be

when she got there. She could already hear her two aunts' whisperings, and mark the confidences interchanged and the plan of the campaign drawn up. For Mrs. St. George, having no children of her own, and being well affected toward her nieces and nephews in general, and Cecil Raymond in particular, would be only too much overjoyed at being called in to assist him at this all-important juncture.

Cecil would be paired off with his cousin at the dinner-table, in the boat, at the luncheon party, throughout the entire proceedings. She could prophetically behold him carrying her shawl and fetching her parasol, waiting for her if she were behind hand, and waiting for no one else if she were in front. She knew for what purpose he had bought a white cotton cover for his umbrella, and almost felt its shade before she had ever seen it unfurled.

All proved correct—only too correct. It was Cecil here and Cecil there, just as had been anticipated. Cecil was directed to look after the Mount Street luggage even at the railway station, and took their tickets and found their compartment subsequently. He it was who sat on the box-seat of his aunt's carriage, looking down backward to point out this view and that as they whirled along the dusty lanes, and his hand was outstretched to help them to alight ere any other assistance could be offered.

Then the net was drawn still closer.

Cecil was told to show the cousin who was a stranger the beauties of the shady garden, with its cool retreats and rustling water-banks. Cecil had to gather for her the evening buttonhole from his aunt's flower-beds. And Cecil was advised to take her out in the little boat that only held two, later on in the evening.

That she declined, but escape from the rest had been impossible.

The next morning was but a repetition of the same. She found her cousin in the seat beside her at the breakfast-table, and he followed her out into the veranda directly the meal was over.

Before the very beginning of the fray she was sick to death of it, of him, and of everyone.

The lovely landscape around her had no beauty in her eyes. The blue, glittering river, winding its way between its willowy bands, with its usual repose broken by the thousands of rainbow-tinted holiday makers, all plying oar and sail for the same point—she scarce cared to look upon it. The warm hay-fields, merry with haymakers, with their background of solemn foliage, all one milky, gray-green hue in the July sunshine—she beheld the fair scene as though it were a bugbear.

Silent and sullen she sat, scarce lifting her gaze from the water at her side, her large sunshade screening her from the observation of the rest, her thoughts elsewhere.

Cecil was rowing, and looking his best in his nice new flannels. He was not altogether happy, poor fellow; he had a gnawing sense of being ungraciously met and repelled at every turn that day; and as until now he had never experienced any actual rebuffs, and had never been able to ascertain positively that his cousin had even wilfully avoided him—since excuse and explanation had always been so glib upon her tongue—the bed of roses he had proposed for himself in Aunt Maria's vine-covered cottage was like to prove but a thorny couch.

Somehow he had reckoned on Geraldine's being all his own if he could once detach her from Bellenden. It had seemed to him that to Bellenden's baneful influence only was due his cousin's variable moods and slippery ways of late. She had been forever eluding him—sometimes on one account, sometimes on another—he could

not catch her tripping, but it had been so, as a fact, to whatever cause due.

He thought, nay he felt sure, that Bellenden was at the bottom of it. Bellenden and he were now almost openly antagonistic; had been for the past fortnight; and Geraldine, while affecting to perceive nothing, was, he could not but think, covertly on Bellenden's side.

But if once he could undermine Bellenden's influence, and counteract the impression which he had apparently made afresh, he thought he could soon reinstate himself with his cousin. That Sir Frederick was not seriously in earnest, that he had no aim beyond standing well with one of the reigning beauties of the season and being seen in her train by those who chronicle such records, must do young Raymond the justice to say was his honest and deliberate conviction. His own feeling for Geraldine was of the calmest and steadiest. He had always been fond of her—as a child he had seen her open to improvement, and he saw her open to improvement now; but he admired and was attracted, and the fact that the match would be one to please his parents and sisters did not in any wise detract from its merits in his eyes, as such facts had been known to do.

But Bellenden had in all probability no idea of a match at all. Bellenden was not a marrying man. He had a manner; it meant nothing. He had employed it with Ethel, and it had misled her and her mother. He was now making free with Geraldine, and she, foolish child, was once again falling into the snare. Was it for him to stand by and see his dear, sweet, lovable cousin thus trifled with? Assuredly not.

CHAPTER XV.

"YOU ARE A PATIENT MAN, SIR FREDERICK."

"I know love's a devil, too subtle to spy,
That shoots through the soul from the beam of an eye;
But in London those devils so quickly fly about,
That a new devil still drives an old devil out."

If Geraldine had only known what was passing in the young man's breast!

She fancied, as people have done, and will do to the end of time, that whatever might be her own doubts and fears, emotions and agitations, they were safely hidden in the innermost recesses of her heart, secure from everyone's ken but her own. It was her one comfort that no one—not even her poor dear—dreamed of those nightly musings, and the daily struggle; and that Cecil, Cecil of all people, Cecil, to whom she had so long been, after her manner, subject, of whose opinion she still had a cold dread, and for whom she still entertained a certain uneasy respect, that Cecil should have made the tumultuous upheaval of her soul the subject for his calm, dispassionate dissection, would have been sufficient to—let us see what it *did* do when the frightful truth burst upon her.

All that day Cecil was on the watch.

His hand was the one on which she had to depend for support, as she stepped ashore upon the green bank, so well known at Henley, where the favored few are permitted to excite the envy of the multitude, where they can feast spaciously and luxuriously, in the long, cool grass beneath the shade, unencumbered by the vulgar, and where they can at ease promenade presently, unjostled by the clamorous.

Cecil was his cousin's escort toward the chosen spot

where Aunt Maria's well-trained servants had already almost completed their tempting arrangements; where the lamb and chicken, and lobster and salad, the salmon, and cucumber, the pie and the *pâté* were repeated up and down the snowy tablecloth, and where the champagne bottles were up to their necks in the ice-pails behind the tree.

Geraldine's place was selected in the shadiest corner, behind which there was a niche, not yet to be filled up, but into which some one would by and by insert himself; some one who was so openly and palpably her cavalier for the nonce that none of the young men of the party durst so much as offer her a piece of bread, although there was more than one present who would fain have done so.

Did she want to go on the river, luncheon being over? Cecil's own little cushioned boat was lying ready, and he would be too proud to take her.

No? Would she prefer the Guards' enclosure? The "Isthmian" enclosure? The Hungarians were playing in the latter; but either enclosure was open to her, as Cecil has passes for both.

What was she to say? Any enclosure that enclosed her, and excluded him? Hardly.

Would she then see the next race rowed? If so, he would show her the right place, the point from which a fine open view, unencumbered by house-boats, might be obtained.

Oh, she was too tired to walk.

Would she take a seat? There were seats in abundance among the trees; and to be sure there was a glare on the river, it would be cooler and pleasanter to get among the trees—even as he spoke she had turned away from him with an exclamation. She had fancied she saw Bellenden.

Previously, no idea of the extent and magnitude of the festival had entered into her mind, and she had supposed that, once there, she would have had no difficulty in being found by any one minded to find her. A regatta was not a race-course, she had argued; and she had been at regattas before—having witnessed a few dull yatchts cruising about in the Firth of Clyde, and stood among a few hundred spectators to see them come in—(which they never did); but of the great regatta of the south, of the crowd, the din, the confusion and strife, the Babel of tongues, the difficulty of movement, and the almost impossibility of meeting without previous appointment, she had had no sort of conception, while Bellenden had been equally ignorant. Had he ever been at Henley Regatta before he would have known, indeed, to confine his search within certain limits; but he had not learned his lesson and had somehow picked up a vague impression that the ladies' quarter was near the bridge, on a large and thronged platform, and finding none of the Raymonds there had somewhat disconcerted him. He had, however, proceeded with his search, scoured the water, assailed the enclosure, peered over the decks of house-boats, and been everywhere and looked everywhere but in the one place where his dove had hid herself, and in consequence he had of course searched and scoured in vain.

Finally he had given it up, and gone home in disgust, but meaning to have compensation in Mount Street presently.

Geraldine had evidently been kept from him by the Raymonds and St. Georges in collusion; either she had not been at the regatta at all, or she had been kept out of sight on purpose; in either of which cases there would be no sort of use in his going down again on the second day. The train had been a purgatory, the rush

at the ticket office and the scramble for a seat something to shudder at, the whole affair a noisy, vulgar, unremunerative day. He had not seen a thing, he had scarcely met a person he knew, he had never endured four hours of greater martyrdom.

And, after all, very little would have been obtained, even if he had found Geraldine in her present company. The Raymonds were obviously holding her fast for the son and heir, and she was for the time unattainable. It would have been but a word, or at most a brief half-hour by her side—and that probably with Cecil, or some deputy of Cecil's, on the other side. It would be but that if he went on the second day; and on the evening of the second day the ladies were to return to town. He decided to stop in town, and present himself in Mount Street during that evening.

The moment the decision had been arrived at, it assumed a form that made up for all the past. Bah! the idea of telling a love tale amidst the roar and riot of that horrid place, beneath a scorching sun, and surrounded by gaping crowds! True, he had meant to wait, and had hoped for the best—for some opening, some chance invitation which might lead to a twilight spent in Paradise, supposing Mrs. St. George, for instance, had proved to be a good-natured, hospitable woman, and he had gone back with the party to The Lawn? But this hope had faded away during the long, hot, fruitless search, and at the close of the day he had felt himself a fool ever to have entertained it. The little balcony in Mount Street, among the blue pots of field daisies, would do as well as, or better than the banks of the Thames.

So it would, and so it might have done, had the lover not been anticipated.

It was late for some people, early for others—in brief, it was past nine o'clock when the announcement of Sir

Frederick Bellenden's name made Geraldine start from the chair into which she had thrown herself to wear out the remainder of a wretched day. She had not dreamed of his or of any one's coming in at that hour; and her hair had been unloosed, her hat, gloves, and parasol thrown down anywhere, and her handkerchief, wet through and through, allowed to drop by her side, as she leaned her flushed and tear-stained face upon her hand, thinking over all that had taken place.

Granny had retired for the night, still more worn out and exhausted; for the family gathering had not been a success, and both she and Geraldine had issued from it, as it were, in disgrace.

Her two daughters had alike resentfully held her at arm's length. Maria had subjected her to questions and comments, Charlotte to innuendoes. She had seen them interchange glances now and again on the reception of her replies, and had by degrees come to grasp the situation in all its details, and to penetrate into the secret of the displeasure which she had herself incurred. It had become plain that she was now understood to be unfavorable to the sisters' views. It had become equally obvious that those views had met with some great and unexpected check.

When the hour for departure had arrived, she and her charge had been suffered to leave without any of those cheerful prognostications and pleasant words and wishes usual on such occasions. There had been no little loving attentions and flatteries, and scarcely even a respectable show of response to her own thanks and farewells; instead, there had been an ominous silence, lowering looks, and cold kisses—and Cecil had been nowhere to be found.

That had informed her of the whole truth; and Geraldine, when tasked, had not even sought to deny it.

Yes, it was as granny had surmised: Cecil, foolish boy, had made himself ridiculous and her very angry; he had been very rude; he——

"Rude!" Granny might well open her eyes. She had never known Cecil Raymond rude in his life. What should he be rude for now?

"Because I could not agree with him, and because I told him he was a spy and a slanderer," then had burst forth Geraldine, with cheeks aflame; "that was why—oh, that was why," she had repeated, her bosom heaving at the recollection.

"But, my dear, my darling, I do not understand"—no wonder the poor old lady had been mystified—"I understand that Cecil, poor fellow, for whom I am very sorry"—("poor, dear boy, I wish he had held his tongue," in parenthesis)—"I understand that you cannot care for him as he does for you; but why should you have been so—so hasty with him? Why should you not quietly and kindly have refused to listen——"

"I did refuse to listen; but not until he had spoken—oh, not until I had heard him say such things—" and upon this the poor child had wept and sobbed afresh, and no more had been forthcoming.

The result was, that granny had gone off to bed, worn and weary with sympathizing first on one side and then on the other—for it must not be supposed she had no feeling for her one and only grandson, nor that she could contemplate the probable family broil to follow without genuine distress and vexation; so that she and Geraldine had naturally agreed to say no more to each other about it that night, but to leave till the morrow all future considerations. Little did either think that the day's work was not over yet.

"You are alone?" said Bellenden, glancing round quickly. "Is Mrs. Campbell——"

"Gone upstairs. We—we have not returned long, and she—she did not expect anyone." Here the speaker's eye fell on the wet handkerchief, and she stooped to pick it up and hide it in her hand.

"And you—did you not expect me either?" inquired he, his voice sinking at once, as he took a chair near her.

No answer; a slight retrograde movement on her part.

"Did you think I could wait another day," proceeded the speaker, in the same significant tone, "not knowing where you had been, nor with whom, nor whether—whether you had ever missed me, nor looked for me?"

"Oh, yes," said Geraldine, suddenly facing him. "Wait? Oh, yes: very well, I should think—very well, indeed. Why not?" she continued, with a hard little laugh, reminding him on the instant of the mocking fiend who had gibed and taunted him that bright morning in Bond Street. "Oh, Sir Frederick, I think you could have waited. You are a patient man. You can wait much longer than that for tidings of your friends, we all know."

("Angry, by Jove! The best sign in the world!" cried Bellenden, exulting, to himself.) Aloud: "Are you twitting me with my stupidity in not finding you yesterday? You do not know how dearly I paid for it. Where were you? Where could you have been? I give you my word that I hunted up and down, in and out, all over the place, for hours and hours, and all in vain, I only gave up when nearly every one had left the place."

"I did not mean that," almost whispered Geraldine, for now she was beginning to shake all over. "I—I—why do you say such things?" she burst forth, with sudden passion. "What right have you to say them? How do you dare to presume that it is anything to me

whether you seek me or not? You—you— I never told you to look for me; I never gave you leave. You must not—you shall not do it. Understand, sir, that I will not have any more of this. I forbid it—I—I——"

"Do you forbid this, Geraldine?" said he, very gently, taking her hand in his. "Do you forbid my asking for this hand, and offering in exchange only my poor heart, which is already yours? I sought you, dear, because I loved you. I think you know I love you; and I think I know that you——"

"That I love you?" cried Geraldine, wildly; "is it *that* which you would say? You know *that?* You would tell me *that?* But you—you are mistaken, Sir Frederick Bellenden. I am not quite the child, the fool I once was. I—I— Oh, how can you—how can you——?" and, unable to articulate more, she could only wrench from his the hand he still held, and let loose anew the brimming floods which would no longer be restrained.

"Who has done this?" cried he aghast.

"Who? What do you mean?"

"This is not your own doing. This is not yourself speaking," proceeded Bellenden, in much agitation. "Some smooth-tongued whisperer has been——"

"Never mind that—never mind that. He did but tell me true, if it has been so; you have chosen to take it for granted that I care for you——"

"And you do not love—? But no, you would not play me false——"

"How am I playing you false?"

"Look back upon the past few weeks," he said. "What am I to think? Have you not given me reason to suppose— Could I think otherwise than that you saw, understood, and returned my feelings for you? Had you meant to reject me—Geraldine, you cannot, you cannot

mean it," he continued, with increased emotion. "You cannot have been trifling with me——" but the word awoke a fatal echo in her heart.

"Trifling?" she cried, scornfully, "and why not 'trifling,' if it suited me to trifle? Why should I not have my turn? You thought little enough once of trifling with me."

"*I?* With *you?*"

"You thought I was but a little girl, a child to be taken up, and petted, and played with, and—dropped. You thought you might say what you chose, do what you chose, kiss me if you chose," and she struck her face upon the spot his lips had burned, "and then—and then—no more. I was to think nothing of it, to laugh at it, to know that others jested about it: I was only a child, you know. What have you to say now, if I have, as you call it, 'trifled' with you?"

He was silent—too much amazed for words.

"Good heavens! Why, Geraldine," he exclaimed at length, after a mute pause, during which each had involuntarily drawn back a pace, and stood quickly breathing in each other's faces. "Why, Geraldine, what strange, delusion is this? I—" he passed his hand over his brow, "I cannot yet understand. Of course, I ought to have written, to have— Pshaw! *that* is not what you can so deeply have resented; there must be more. Is it possible, then, that I—that you—that anything ever passed between you and me in the old days which could have been taken in so ill a part that it must needs rise as a barrier between us forevermore?"

"What did pass between us? Stop where you are," —for he had made a movement toward her." What did pass?"

"Why, we were companions, friends—we liked to be together. I was fond of you, and you—by Heavens! if

I had ever thought—ever imagined—But you cannot mean it——"

"I—do mean it."

"You cared for me?" his voice faltered.

"I did care."

"You? A mere child!"

"I was no 'mere child.'"

"But you could not have known—it is not possible you could have known what love meant. You could never have felt——"

"Not have felt? Not known? Oh, how little, how little can you know?" cried she, weeping afresh. "Not have known, when you yourself had taught me! Not have felt—oh, I think I shall never feel again—*can* never feel again as I did then! You ask me *now* for my heart? You stole it *then*. How did I get it back? Only through your neglect and utter indifference. But I have it now—fast; never, never to part with it more. No! not now—not again—" as he once more endeavored to speak and to be heard. "Not again. Once in a life-time is enough. Oh, you had it that once—" here her voice was almost lost in convulsive sobs—"that once," she whispered, "but—but—a second—time—*never!*" and, with a sudden rush, she flew past and vanished from his sight, leaving him dumb, motionless, and alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION—GRANNY TO THE FRONT.

"There's a sigh for 'Yes,' and a sigh for 'No,'
And a sigh for 'I can't bear it.'
Oh, what's to be done? Shall we stay or run?
Oh, cut the sweet apple and share it."

Had she then all this time been but revenging herself? Bellenden asked himself the humiliating question a thousand times, smarting with shame, disappointment, and, worse still, disenchantment.

Had the girl to whom he had given such a high place in his imagination as well as in his heart, been playing toward him a part so unworthy? Had she, whom he had all unwittingly, sinned against—for it had been unwittingly, when all was said and done—had this bright, beautiful creature, with her noble bearing, and her proud scorn of all that was false and mean, stooped on his account to a vengeance so far beneath her?

He could hardly believe it. Had an angel descended to soil its wings he could not have felt his faith in goodness, purity, and truth more cruelly shaken.

Could this have been Geraldine who had just fled from him, as though his touch were contamination? Could this have been she who had poured forth such derisive taunts, announced such a petty, base, and degrading scheme as her own? Could it have been her sweet face, so many a time and oft turned toward him, shy as a blushing rosebud, which had now been overspread by the angry glow, and whose features had been, alas! distorted with a fury of which he had been the object?

He felt as if a rough touch had been laid on his shoulder, and a rough voice in his ear had bidden him

awake from a fair dream and face a harsh reality. His idol had been shattered, and lay in pieces at his feet.

She, for her part, spent the night in tears. Why make a mystery of it?

Of course the whole had been Cecil's work. He had contrived, goodness knows how! to draw his cousin apart, and get her to himself at last, on the second day of the festival; and he had then first pleaded his own cause, and pleaded, as we know, in vain; and subsequently, and doubtless with more acrimony than might otherwise have been vented, turned his attention toward blasting the hopes of his presumably more successful rival.

He had not meant to order his plan of action on this wise. It was to have been thus: Clear the course of Bellenden--then walk the course, Raymond.

But lovers seldom keep to their programmes on such occasions, and Cecil at the critical moment had come to grief.

His own wreckage had been a certainty almost from the outset; but he had done himself none the less damage in that he had sought to involve Bellenden in his ruins.

It must be supposed that finally this had been apparent to him. But there is, as every one knows, a certain fierce consolation in hitting back, even though each blow recoils on the head of the striker; and Geraldine's suitor, beholding his suit hopelessly rejected, may be pardoned if, not being a man of fine character, he had not taken the downfall of his hopes quite so well as he should have done.

He had been as unable to bridle his tongue as a woman, and, sore from his own wounds, had recklessly delivered as many as he could in return.

Nothing, he well knew, would hurt the proud-spirited

girl more than any reverting to the old childish folly, and accordingly—we are sorry to say it—it had been to this that the defeated candidate had turned at once.

A very indifferent tale it had been to hearken to. He had been watching his cousin, he had allowed, and been very much afraid, very apprehensive and anxious on her account. He had hoped against hope that he had been mistaken. Not less on her account than on his own (on his own he would now say nothing—that was past—and, therefore, and only since it was past, was he now free to raise a note of warning), but, on her account, he thought he really ought now to speak. He must speak as a relation, as a brother, since she would allow him no nearer and dearer title. A certain flighty friend of his—she must know to whom he alluded—was now, he feared, playing the same game that he had tried on with Geraldine before. All had known this, and had noticed it. It did not become him to judge whether or not he would this time meet with a like success; but Geraldine knew, Geraldine must remember how her fancy had once been caught by Bellenden's foolish and unmeaning gallantry—he had got no further.

So far he had been heard out, since, in her bewilderment and consternation, she had had no words wherewith to stop him; but all at once she had realized that her childhood's romantic dream which had cost her so dear, but which she had deemed all her own, had been, and still was, the sport and scoff of others.

Cecil had exaggerated, perhaps naturally, in saying that "all" had known and noticed, but he had certainly, in furtherance of his end, been happy in the hint; it had been caught up at once by the sensitive ear on which it had fallen, and had been construed into something yet further from the truth than was actually the case.

She had been gossiped about, giggled over, smirked at—oh! how terrible.

Never, never could she hold up her head again among those who had made her their jest; never again could she meet Bellenden in their presence, nor hear them pronounce his name without a shiver.

As for quietly going on her way, having daily intercourse with the relations in Grosvenor Square, meeting Cecil going in and out (he had begged that there might be no alteration in the usual routine), it was not to be thought of.

The earth had shaken under her feet. She had doubted everyone, distrusted everyone, almost hated everyone that cruel summer day. A little wisdom, and a little common-sense, even a few hours' repose and time to think the matter over, might have put a new face upon past and future; but Bellenden had been too precipitate; he had appeared when the storm had been yet at its height, and had come in smiling, happy, confident—far, far too confident, to her mind—and he had had even a worse time of it than Cecil Raymond.

So now, what was to be done?

Imagine granny's consternation when, the next morning, the headstrong girl, neither calmer nor wiser than on the night before, announced her next decision, which was that back the two must hie—and that without a moment's breathing space—to the wilds of Inchmarew.

It was the first week of July, and some of the pleasantest part of the London season was yet to come; there were the garden parties, the suburban fêtes, the river excursions, the little frolics hither and thither for which no time could be found earlier—must all these be sacrificed? And for what?

For Inchmarew in July? In July, when grim St.

Swithin holds his cheerless rule in the west country, when the crisp freshness of the summer is past, and the mellow warmth of autumn is not yet begun? When the young vegetables are over, and the fruit is barely ripe! When no one—actually no one—not the veriest waif or stray is yet to be found along the coasts of Argyll?

Poor Mrs. Campbell grew almost tearful over the subject, and flushed her prettiest pink demonstrating and protesting. She had little anticipated such extreme measures. She had thought the Raymond affair might be patched up without any great difficulty. It might, it probably would, have its disagreeable side; it might produce awkward moments and uncomfortable restraint; but surely it was not of sufficient importance to break up their whole tenor of life for the time being. She had taken the house for another month, and no one was expecting them back at Inchmarew. The rooms would not be ready, the repairs not finished, the painters and paperers not off the premises. "Nothing would be prepared, and it did seem a pity to let such a"—she did not exactly say a "trifle," but the tone in which she said "a thing as this" implied it—"it did seem a pity to let such a thing as this put out so many people, and disarrange so much."

Of course, granny vowed and protested, of course her darling could not be tormented by Cecil, nor by any of his family—Geraldine might trust her for that. Of course if Geraldine wished it, she would forbid her grandson the house—although that did seem unnecessary, since it was not likely that he would really care to come about, in spite of his bravado in begging that no difference might be made. *That* had been Cecil all over. His first thought had been to evade the comments of the world. But even if he did wish to carry

this too far, he should not be allowed to disturb his cousin's peace by doing so.

For herself granny allowed—and the affectionate young heart went straight out to her on the spot for the words—that, sorry as she was, she would have been still more sorry had Cecil's love-suit ended differently.

Here Geraldine's lip began to quiver. Up to this point her face had been set as in a vice. "I felt as if everyone were against me yesterday," she murmured, "even you, dear. You—you said so little, and—and you seemed so grieved for him."

"I was grieved, and I am grieved; but," said the old lady, almost fiercely. "I consider Cecil is a fool all the same. He ought to have seen and known long ago—any man with an ounce of perception would—that you did not care a button for him. He might have seen that there was another——"

"*What? You*, too?" And with a great cry, out it all came, and everything was explained.

"If you had only said so before!" And poor granny felt as if she could never forgive herself, and cried also, and wiped her eyes to ring the bell, and give orders, and send messages, and then sat down to her desk to write notes and frame excuses without a second's hesitation.

"We can let it appear among ourselves that it was this cousinly affair," quoth she smartly, "and the world must think what it pleases. Nay, it will very likely hardly think of us at all; we shall just be missed for a day, and no more, and we shall enjoy the *éclat* of retiring early, as the best people always do retire early from everything. It is not worth while to drink the cup of pleasure to the dregs." And so she gave out generally.

"My granddaughter and I have had enough," she said. "I am getting to be an old woman, and cannot stand as

much as I once could"—("I cannot stand two rejected proposals in one day," she mentally specified)—"and so we are off to rest and recruit. We may hope, if all is well, to stay longer another year."

By the end of the week everything had been adjusted, the bills paid, the light surface of the rooms dismantled, and most of the servants sent on in front.

Geraldine was out making a round of "good-by" visits, as she and her grandmother were themselves to be off on the following day, when a visitor was announced to Mrs. Campbell, as to whose coming nothing was said to anybody else at the time.

He had evidently known when to call, however, and had been expected, although there was with it all a certain apprehensiveness in his ring of the door-bell, and stealthiness in his step upon the stair, which betokened a tread upon enchanted ground.

"We are quite alone," said his hostess hastily.

He murmured some inaudible reply.

"My granddaughter has gone out," proceeded the speaker, "and will not return for an hour or two. She has a number of things to do, and people to see, as we leave town to-morrow."

He bowed in silence.

"I think," continued the old lady, very kindly, "I think that we need not stand on any very great ceremony with each other, Sir Frederick Bellenden. You would not have come here if you had not wished me to be plain-spoken. Shall I, then, tell you at once all I know and what I think? Or will you—?" and she looked inquiringly.

But it was certain he would not. He had been too much exasperated, hurt, and confounded at the first, too much cast down subsequently, to have rallied without the aid now thrown out; and, as it was, he remained speech-

less, merely turning on her a dumb, appealing eye, which seemed to implore comfort and hope.

Perish pride. Mrs. Campbell had meant to be proud enough and dignified enough to have sustained the honor of all the generations defunct of her grandchild's ancestors; but what could the benevolent old creature do against a handsome gallant who had long ago subjugated herself as well as Geraldine (after the proper, respectable, grandmotherly fashion), and who now hung upon her lips, thought what she thought, saw what she saw, felt what she felt?

Poor granny had never been so set-up in her life. Bellenden had not an idea nor an opinion apart from hers; and she was encouraged to tell what she had seen, whisper what she had suspected, and suggest what should next be done, with nothing but the most eager acquiescence on his part.

Finally, she wound up with a prophecy that all would come right yet; and, thereupon, the despondent and dejected figure who had crept so humbly and cautiously in, vanished into thin air, while in its place sat upright a broad form, with square shoulders, and courageous and undaunted air, prepared for anything, and thirsting to display his valor.

"But, mind, my dear Sir Frederick, do, pray, mind this," urged his counsellor at parting, "do pray, be careful. Not a word, not a single word of this interview to Geraldine. I know my child. She is hot and sensitive. She has the hasty blood of her race. Did she but once suspect you had been with me, she would take fire at once, and who knows whether we should ever succeed in allaying it a second time? She must not know—must never know—at least, I mean until—until—you will choose your own time for telling her, of course; but it must not be, *must not* be yet."

"My dear Mrs. Campbell, you may trust me. And now," said Bellenden, with some just emotion, "how shall I ever thank you for the service you have done me? Had it not been for you, I, too, should have left—I was on the point of departure when I received your note—and, once gone, should I ever have learned the truth? I tremble to think of it. I should never, of myself, have spoken again. No man could, who had been told what I had. And how was I to suppose there could be any explanation? Because, you see, she was always so truthful——"

"She is the most truthful child in the world," cried granny, interrupting him; "but I think no woman living but would have excused her that one little lie."

"Nor man, neither," said Bellenden, in spirits to laugh. "She has but to own it was one, to be forgiven everything."

"We shall meet, then, ere very long?" said the old lady, giving him her hand.

"Within a few days, I trust."

"And—at Inchmarew?"

"At Inchmarew."

Granny said that evening that she had really had a pleasant day, and was not in the least fatigued; nor would she go early to bed, alleging that she liked the cool eventide to sit and think in; and, accordingly, she had her chair brought out and placed in the balcony, although the china pots and daisies were gone, and there she sat silent and smiling, a little to the wonder of some one else, who was in anything but a smiling mood.

All through the preceding week the temperature in Geraldine's veins had been steadily going down; every morning she had arisen cooler and calmer, and more and

more ready to be persuaded and reasoned with, had there been anybody at hand to reason and persuade.

But the prudent grandmother had seen all and held her tongue.

She had forecast a swift repentance; but she also prophesied a return of the tantrums were the repentance forced on apace, and not allowed to work its own end; and, therefore, although it had been no easy thing to do, she had put a curb not only on her speech, but on her actions, and had by word and act carried out the will of her young tyrant.

Perhaps Geraldine had almost hoped to be remonstrated with, and perhaps, had she been so, she might have given way; but granny, with a chuckle, had gone on with her preparations.

The child needed a lesson; and to give her her head at this crisis, and let her hang herself on her own rope as it were, was incontestably the best thing to be done; and therefore, although the "poor dear" really sacrificed self, and could not but heave a sigh as she looked round upon the still attractive scene, the busy parks and streets, and cards upon her plate and mantelpiece; while in the background she had but a rueful vision of Inchmarew Castle, cold and solitary, and with the covers only just whipped off in the state-rooms—still she held bravely to the rôle she had laid down for herself; and the only thing she had done was to drop Bellenden the furtive line which had arrested his departure, and brought him to her side at the first convenient opportunity.

Now she could afford to sit and smile on her balcony.

Dear old soul! she found fault with nothing—not even with the rain on the Argyllshire hill-tops, although it fell in waterspouts on the first evening of their return to their Highland home.

Dismal as was the outlook from her bedroom window,

where she stood awhile to gaze upon the dreary mists hanging overhead, and the leaden waste of waters beneath—she scarcely seemed to notice it. One previous inquiry had satisfied her; she had learned that the summer boat was running, the boat which touched every evening at their own pier, and that had been enough.

On the other hand, poor little Geraldine was miserable down to the very tips of her fingers, and shivered and shuddered, and professed herself abjectly penitent for bringing her grandmother back in such an evil hour—she had almost said to such an evil place. Inchmarew had never before seemed desolate and drear. She could not have believed it had she been told, that she could ever have looked upon the loved home of her childhood with such an ungracious eye. The very servants saw that she was unresponsive and out of spirits, and fancied she had grown fine and scornful.

"This miserable, miserable rain," she moaned, "how gloomy, how deplorable, it all looks! And yet I never found it gloomy and deplorable before. I laughed at Aunt Charlotte when she warned me that it would be so. I forgot to tell you, dear, how indignant Aunt Charlotte was with me for running away when I went to say my 'good-by' to her. She said I need not have made myself uneasy; that none of them would ever have troubled me; and that at least the unfortunate affair might have been allowed to die out of itself. I got away as soon as I could, and left my love for Ethel and Alicia. They will not come here this autumn, that is one thing. Oh, it is something to feel I am done with the Raymonds, and Aunt Maria, and all of them, for the present; that I can breathe freely, and not be in agonies lest I should meet them at every turning of a street; but still—but still—" and she drew a long, weary, despairing breath.

Now the curious thing was, that in exact proportion as the grandchild's spirits sank did those of the grandmother rise.

She prattled and gossiped, inquired about this and that, spread about the little novelties for the rooms which she had acquired in London; arranged a succession of autumn house-parties, consisting of the different new acquaintances with whom it was desirable to keep up friendly intercourse, and who had said they should presently be in the north, and altogether seemed to have no sympathy with, nor to make any allowance for, Geraldine's depression.

"You seem very merry to-night, grandmamma." (When the "poor dear" was entitled "grandmamma" she knew what it meant.) "You seem quite rejoiced to be here, in this dull place, on this melancholy evening," pursued the speaker, fretfully. "I am sure I am very glad you like it. It is a good thing anyone can be merry," shuddering. "Even fires!" and she cast a scornful glance at the blazing logs, thinking of the warmth and sunlight of the south.

"The fire is needed certainly," observed granny, no whit abashed. "A fire always looks cheerful, and my feeling is to have one whenever you can bear it."

"At least it seems to have made you cheerful; I cannot say that it has had the same effect on me," replied the despondent young lady. "I never felt less cheerful in my life."

"You want a companion, my dear," slyly.

"Humph!"

"Miss Corunna would come, I dare say."

"Oh, pray do not ask her, granny, *pray* don't," in great alarm. "I feel as if I could not bear Miss Corunna, nor anyone else just now. I love Miss Corunna—but I don't want her, indeed I don't! I only want to be let alone.

I shall be all right soon. By to-morrow, I dare say. Dear," with a swift return to gentle tenderness, "dear, I am very selfish. Try to forgive me. You know I am unhappy; but I ought not to let you suffer for it, dear, good, kind granny, that you are," and the evening ended in each other's arms.

"By to-morrow, indeed!" whispered granny to herself, tears and laughter struggling with each other in her bosom. "By to-morrow, my sweet Geraldine? Yes, indeed, I can well believe there will be another face by to-morrow."

For she knew by this time that all was right, and that the magician who was to transform cloud and mist, dejection and gloom, into sunshine and gladness, was already at his post, and only awaiting that morrow's dawn to begin his delightful task.

The next morning Geraldine was missing at noontide.

"Gone off to the burnside, ma'am, to her old place beneath the waterfall where she used to fish," cheerfully explained the white-headed domestic, who read in this a return to a happier mood than had characterized the evening before. "She did not take her rod, nor yet ask for Donald; but she's there all the same, for Hector here saw her cross the road, and away up through the birken wood."

"I think," said the lady shortly after, when repeating this to a third person who had walked up from the Ferry Inn, where he had managed to endure the night, though it had not been an agreeable one—"I think Sir Frederick, you know the place. It is somewhere near that waterfall that we hear now," for they were standing outside the house as she spoke—"of course I can send some one to show you the way, but—" he was off almost ere he could repudiate the idea.

Nothing could have been better. Geraldine in her own

enchanted nest of fern and heather, in the spot wherein he had first beheld her, the spot whereupon he had won his first triumphs. Could he have wished for better omen now?

And there she was!

He did not call her, as he drew near. She was standing on the self-same ledge of slippery rock whereon he had startled her that afternoon three years ago, and standing so near the edge that he durst not risk startling her again.

He was almost afraid to move, or to breathe—and it seemed ages ere she turned, and slowly and sorrowfully, as it seemed, moved with downcast eyes toward him.

At length she was close by his side on the confines of the long, rank, dripping grass, and then one word rang out bold and strong—"Geraldine!"

Geraldine did not scream, nor faint, nor fall this time. She only stood quite still, while the color slowly left her cheek, her blue eyes dilated, and her lips fell apart.

Who was this? Who spoke? What did he there?

Was he—was she—were they both—where were they, and what did it all mean?

She swayed gently forwards and once again found herself clasped in the same strong arms that had held her in the self-same spot before.

But—the resemblance went no further.

"I shall not let you go this time," whispered a voice in her ear. "I have you fast; and, Geraldine, I *will* know, I *will* know the truth at last. You lied to me in London—oh, my darling, my darling, you did; I know it, I am sure of it, and now—there—there, don't weep so bitterly—or if you will, let me kiss away the tears. Geraldine, I love you, and I must love you whether you will or no; be generous and forgive, and let us both be

happy. Nay, don't hide your face"—but he found the way to it presently.

She could not struggle with him—could not choose but hearken to him—could not but be happy in her cage.

And Bellenden knew his ground by this time, and was very sure that half measures would be productive of only half content.

Before he left that damp and delightful (but sadly rheumatic) spot, he had obtained all he wanted, the fair hand that lay in his had been promised him, the heart pressed to his own had been allowed to be his already, and he had obtained forgiveness for all the past.

And the only word—or about the only word—that had been dropped out on the other side, had found vent in a murmur so soft that it had been almost inaudible. "Still, you know, I do think—I do think that you shouldn't—shouldn't shouldn't—have quite—*quite* treated me as if I had been a mere child."

"No, I shouldn't," acknowledged the happy lover, ready to acknowledge anything. "Shall I promise I will never do so any more?"

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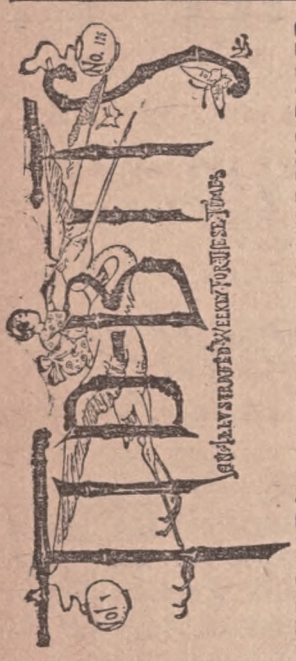

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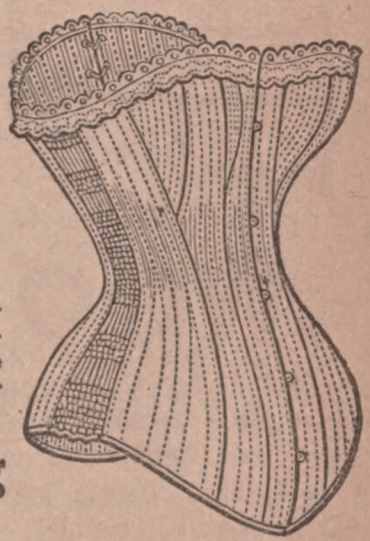

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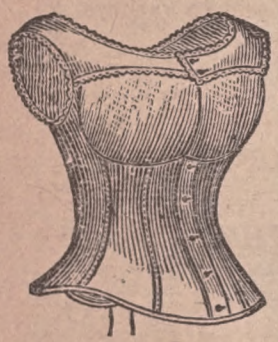

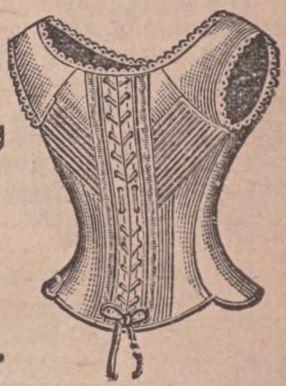

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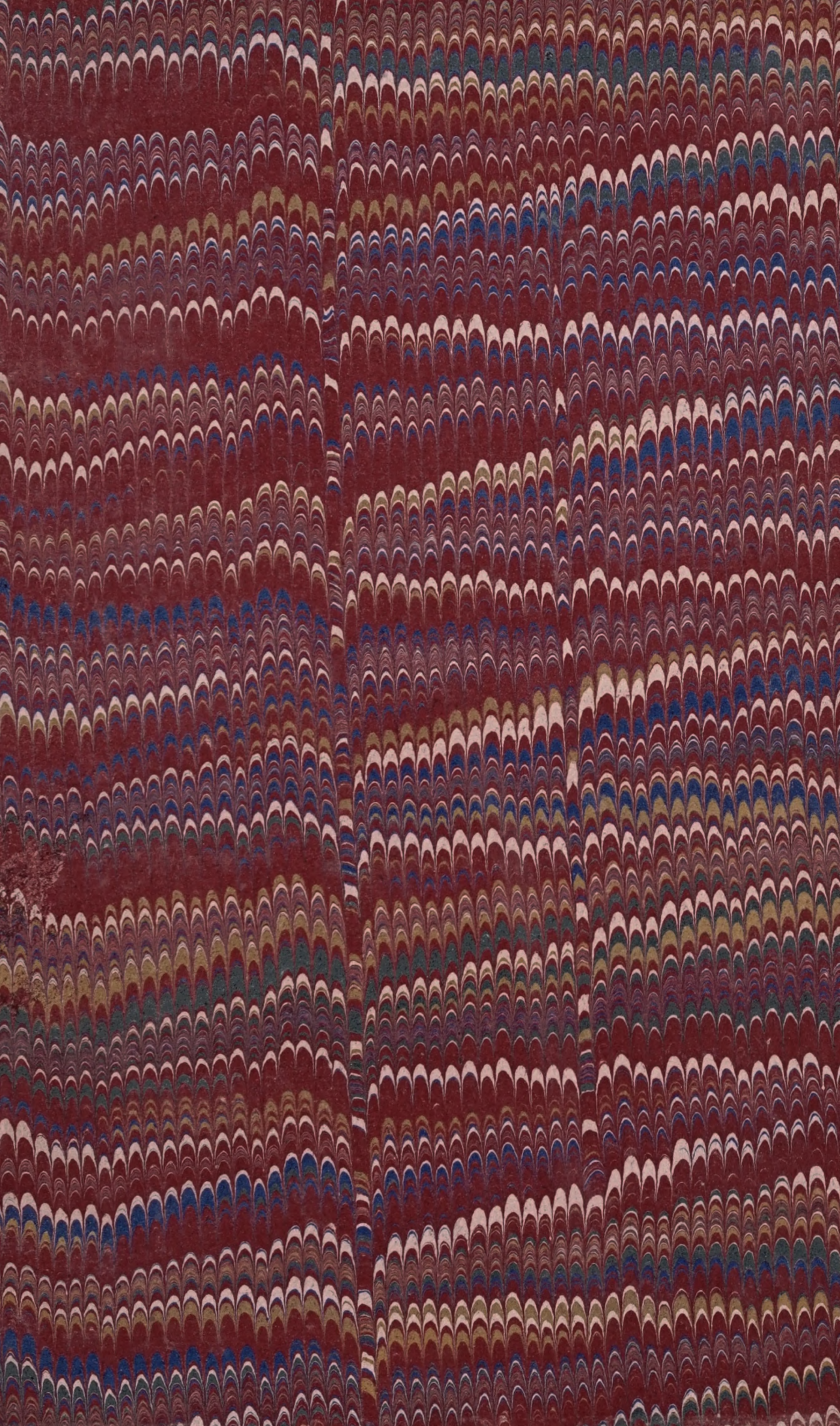

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